



MHCC NEWS RELEASE

MHCC Supports New Recommendations on Pediatric Mental Health

Calgary, AB March 26, 2008 – The Honourable Michael Kirby, Chair of the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) expressed his support today for the new recommendations on pediatric mental health put forward in the *Reaching for the Top* report on children’s health and wellness in Canada.

The study by Dr. K. Kellie Leitch, Chair of Pediatric Surgery at the Children’s Hospital in London, Ontario, was presented to the Honourable Tony Clement, federal Minister of Health on March 25, 2008.

“I wholly support Dr. Leitch’s recommendations on children and youth mental health,” says Michael Kirby. “These recommendations include developing a National Strategy on Mental Health with a focus on children and youth and an anti-stigma campaign aimed primarily at children, youth and their parents. The MHCC has begun work in these two significant areas and this report reinforces the importance of these initiatives.”

The study also recommends that the Child and Youth Advisory Committee of the MHCC establish an expert panel to focus on mental health access for children and youth in the first six months of its mandate.

“We would embrace the opportunity to establish a panel such as the one suggested by Dr. Leitch,” says Dr. Simon Davidson, Chair of the Commission’s Child and Youth Advisory Committee.

The report says 70 per cent of childhood cases of mental health problems can be solved through early diagnosis and interventions. But it points out only one in five Canadian children who needs mental health services receives them.

“This is unacceptable given that 80 per cent of all psychiatric disorders emerge in early adolescence,” says Michael Kirby. “As a nation, we clearly must do better for our children.” March 26, 2008 2

The MHCC is a non-profit organization created to focus national attention on mental health issues. It is funded by the federal government but operates at arm's length from all levels of government. The Commission's objective is to enhance the health and social outcomes for Canadians living with mental health problems and illnesses. To achieve this goal the Commission is pursuing three key initiatives: leading the development of a national mental health strategy; creating a ten-year campaign to reduce the widespread stigma associated with mental health problems and illnesses and eliminate the discrimination many people living with mental health problems and illnesses confront daily; and establishing a Knowledge Exchange Centre to make information about mental health and mental illness available to all Canadians and improve communication and collaboration across the mental health sector.

The Commission was announced by Prime Minister Stephen Harper in response to one of the recommendations in the report by the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, titled *Out of the Shadows at Last*. Former Senator Michael Kirby was Chair of the Senate Committee at the time the report was released.

About the Mental Health Commission of Canada

The Mental Health Commission of Canada is governed by a Board of Directors, consisting of 11 non-governmental members, and seven who are appointed by Federal, Provincial and Territorial governments as well as the Chair – the Honourable Michael Kirby, who was appointed by the Government of Canada. The Board is assisted in its work by eight Advisory Committees.

For more information contact:

Micheal Pietrus, Director of Communications
(403) 385-4040
www.mentalhealthcommission.ca