



NEWS RELEASE

MENTAL HEALTH COMMISSION CHAIR MICHAEL KIRBY NAMED TO ORDER OF CANADA

CALGARY, December 30, 2008 – The Chair of the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) Michael Kirby was appointed an Officer of the Order of Canada today. Her Excellency the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, Governor-General, made the announcement in recognition of Mr. Kirby's more than thirty years of public service on major policy issues and his current commitment to confronting the challenges related to mental health.

In the proclamation, Mr. Kirby was singled out “for his contributions to public policy and good governance in Canada, and more recently, for his leadership of the Mental Health Commission of Canada.” The Order of Canada is the highest civilian honour that can be bestowed upon an individual in Canada. It recognizes a lifetime of outstanding achievement, dedication to the community and service to the nation.

“It has been my privilege to work towards improving the quality of life for Canadians...to help make a difference. To be recognized for this work is deeply gratifying. This honour also reflects the efforts of the many people I have worked with over the years, including those currently involved with the Mental Health Commission,” Mr. Kirby said.

On behalf of the Mental Health Commission of Canada, President and CEO Michael Howlett congratulated Mr. Kirby on his appointment. “Few people have given themselves so selflessly to improving the lives of fellow Canadians. Michael Kirby has dedicated nearly four decades to public service, most recently as Chair of our Mental Health Commission. We are very proud to see him recognized for his tireless work,” he said.

Michael Kirby has been serving Canadians since 1970 when he was Principal Assistant to the Premier of Nova Scotia. He then became Deputy Principal Secretary to Prime Minister Trudeau. From 1980 to 1983, he was Deputy Clerk of the Privy Council. During that time he was heavily involved in negotiations which led to the patriation of the Canadian Constitution and the inclusion of the Charter of Rights in the Constitution. He also served as Chair of the Task Force on Atlantic Fisheries and was instrumental in restructuring Canada's east coast fishing industry.

(...page 2)



In 1984 Mr. Kirby was called to the Senate. He chaired a Senate committee looking into Canada's health care system, which culminated in a 2002 report called Recommendations for Reform. Many of these recommendations are currently being enacted by governments across the country.

Mr. Kirby later chaired another Senate committee which studied mental illness and addiction. In May 2006 the committee released its final report called "Out of the Shadows at Last." It sparked the creation of the Mental Health Commission of Canada. In late 2006, Mr. Kirby retired after 22 years as a Senator. A few months later he was appointed Chair of the Mental Health Commission.

The MHCC's Vice Chairs commended Mr. Kirby on being appointed to the Order of Canada.

"Michael Kirby has led a movement over the last several years through his Senate report and through his work with the MHCC, with the important goal of making an enduring difference in the lives of Canadians affected by mental illness. This is a crowning career achievement, a worthy goal, and a tribute to his energy, intellect and commitment," said Dr. David Goldbloom.

"Michael Kirby solves life's ongoing riddles through individual and collective vision quests; speaks words of mindfulness through the eloquence of example; and yields to the winds of change and the wings of changers. His contributions in mental health confirm what we cannot reasonably doubt - he is one of Canada's true leaders," said Aboriginal educator Madeleine Dion Stout.

For more information please contact:

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