



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Mental Health Commission of Canada Appoints President & CEO

CALGARY, AB February 15, 2008 - The Honourable Michael Kirby, Chair of the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC), today announced the appointment of Michael Howlett as the President and Chief Executive Officer of the newly formed Commission. His appointment will take effect February 18, 2008.

“Michael Howlett brings the vision, proven leadership and experience essential to help the Commission achieve its ultimate goal of keeping mental illness out of the shadows forever,” said Michael Kirby, Chair of the MHCC’s Board of Directors. “Michael Howlett has distinguished himself as a results-oriented business and non-profit sector leader who is respected for his work nationally and internationally. He understands the important balance of fiscal and philanthropic responsibility.”

Mr. Howlett is currently the President and CEO of the Canadian Diabetes Association (CDA). For the last five years, he has been a champion for those affected by diabetes, working with government, the medical and research community and business. Under his direction, the CDA experienced a dramatic turnaround. It has become a financially sound and effective national organization, internationally recognized as the authority in diabetes research, education and advocacy.

Mr. Howlett’s professional career spans three decades. Prior to joining CDA, he established himself both as a successful business leader and champion of causes that defended those who could not defend themselves.

“This is a great opportunity to make a difference. I have seen firsthand the effect poor mental health can have on a family, and I look forward to working on behalf of the Mental Health Commission to improve the lives of Canadians impacted by mental illness. We look to build strong partnerships with government and business to make mental health the foundation of total health,” said Mr. Howlett.

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

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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 establishing a Knowledge Exchange Centre to improve cross-sector communication about mental health and mental illness for all Canadians.

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 – Transforming Mental Health, Mental Illness and Addiction Services in Canada." Former Senator Michael Kirby was Chair of the Senate Committee and Senator Wilbert Keon served as Deputy Chair during the drafting of the report.

Funding for the Mental Health Commission of Canada was provided by the Government of Canada in its March 2007 budget, and the Mental Health Commission's Board of Directors held its first meeting on September 10, 2007.

Mr. Kirby expressed his appreciation to Glenn Thompson for his leadership as Interim President and CEO of the MHCC over the past 7 months.

About the Mental Health Commission of Canada

The Mental Health Commission of Canada is a non-profit organization created to focus attention on mental health issues and to work to improve the health and social outcomes of people living with mental illness. The Mental Health Commission of Canada is governed by a Board of Directors, consisting of 11 non-governmental directors, 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.

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