**Mental Health and Cities Summit**

**Expert Panel Notes**

**April 9, 2018**

**Moderator: Dr. Kwame McKenzie**, CEO, Wellesley Institute

**Panel Participants**:

* **Jennifer Chambers** – Executive Director, Empowerment Council, which serves as the voice of people with lived experience at CAMH
* **Dr. Eileen de Villa** – Chief Medical Officer, Toronto Public Health
* **Kathy Langlois** – Canada/USA liaison – International Initiative for Mental Health Leadership (IIMHL) and the International CIty and Urban Regional CoLlaborativE - (I-CIRCLE)
* **Robert Moore** – Executive Director, Provincial Systems Support Program, CAMH

**Panel Highlights: Improving Mental Well-being in the City is Everyone’s Business**

**Opening Comments**

Mental health affects every demographic in every community across Canada, including Toronto. This Summit offers a unique opportunity for Toronto to convene a discussion on the urgency of mental health concerns in urban settings, and on how cities can partner with federal and provincial governments to foster mental well-being. The presentations by the mayors and keynotes in the morning provided information about the work and promising practices used in other cities and countries. Bringing in diverse perspectives, the Expert Panel discussed urban mental health issues and promising interventions to improve mental well-being in cities.

The Expert Panel featured lessons from the public health sector, a system approach, international perspective, and people with lived experience of mental illness and/or addictions.

**Key Messages**

***The Importance of Social Determinants of Health in improving mental well-being in the city***

The discussion emphasized the importance of the social and economic conditions in which people are born, live, work, and age (also known as Social Determinants of Health) in supporting people’s mental health and well-being. Health care is one contributing factor to health, but from a public health perspective, social determinants of health are also essential in promoting mental well-being and addressing mental illness and/or addictions. Factors such as income, meaningful employment, housing, and social cohesion are significant social determinants that we need to focus on to foster the mental well-being of all Torontonians.

***Cross-sectoral collaboration as a crucial way to advance the mental well-being agenda***

Panelists highlighted that cities, provinces, federal governments, businesses and the service sectors can all play a role in improving mental wellness and preventing mental illness and/or addictions in cities. Better coordination and collaboration across these sectors are important to better address the needs of the whole population, including people who may be at risk of, or have mental illness and/or addictions. Linkages between health and non-health sectors are critical to bolstering the broader social and economic conditions that influence people’s mental well-being. The workplace is a key setting to build a mentally healthy community. Partnership can be formed with employers including those in the private sector to build mentally healthy workplaces.

***Individual actions can make a difference***

Individuals across the city can play a role in improving mental wellness and supporting people with mental illness and/or addictions. Small kind actions such as noticing others’ needs and offering to help can make a difference to the life of others. Civic engagement increases social connectedness, which is important for mental well-being. Exercising the right to vote is a form of civic engagement with broader societal impact and benefits.

Mental health is everyone’s business. We can all engage in conversations around mental health. Initiatives such as Mental Health First Aid can be introduced broadly in the city to improve mental health awareness and literacy, and increase mental wellness.

***Meaningful partnership and engagement with diverse stakeholders especially people with lived experience***

The Panel suggested a coordinated approach to support mental well-being in the city. By bringing stakeholders together and developing plans to translate visions into actions, we can create and sustain system improvements that address the needs of all Torontonians including people with mental illness and/or addictions.

To make Toronto a better place to live for everyone, we need meaningful engagement and partnership with people with lived experience of mental illness and/or addictions, and ensure they are included in decision-making. Initiatives such as the Friendship Bench and promoting peer- run organizations are potential opportunities to partner with people with lived experience and improve mental well-being of all Torontonians.

***Learning from promising international initiatives and resources***

The work of the International Initiative for Mental Health Leadership (IIMHL) and the International CIty and Urban Regional CoLlaborativE - (I-CIRCLE) were presented as two opportunities for international networking, knowledge sharing, and promoting urban mental health and well-being. The IIMHL brings together mental health leaders across countries and agencies to share innovations, models, and strategies, and to network and problem solve in promoting mental wellness, preventing mental illness and ensuring recovery. The I-CIRCLE has partnered with cities and organizations to bring to life the promise of the city mental health movement and the Declaration on Leading Cities and Their Regions to Better Mental Health for Their Residents. One of the key principles of the Declaration is about changing the culture to make mental health everyone’s business.

**Conclusion**

The conversation demonstrated that mental health is truly everyone’s business. There are promising practices across Canada and the world that we can use to collectively foster mental well-being in Toronto. By engaging the whole society, increasing awareness, and committing to work collaboratively across sectors, mental health can flourish in all settings in Toronto.