



PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Technology, clusters critical to health care and central to Budget 2017 - commitments open door to APEC Digital Hub efforts

Canada announces global mental health conference in June 2017; further details of Hub plans released in video

OTTAWA, MARCH 27, 2017—On behalf of the APEC Digital Hub for Mental Health (led by the University of British Columbia, the University of Alberta and the Mood Disorders Society of Canada), Phil Upshall applauds the federal government for making commitments to invest in mental health and digital innovations in its 2017 budget. Opportunities to help the one in five Canadians who suffer from mental health include:

- \$950 million over five years for investments in business-led super clusters involving digital technology and health/bio-sciences among others
- \$5 billion over 10 years to support mental health initiatives
- \$17.5 million over four years to create a Centre of Excellence on PTSD and related mental health conditions to support veterans
- \$57.8 million over five years to expand mental health care capacity for all inmates in federal correctional facilities

The budget also noted that “while the health care system has served Canadians well, innovations are required to better meet the needs of patients as changes in demographics, health needs and the use of technology continue to evolve.” The federal government wants to double the number of high-growth companies in Canada, particularly in the digital and health technology sectors. Innovation takes many forms; there is nowhere better to start looking at how to effectively do that than with the Digital Hub, Upshall said.

“The 2017 budget made strides to prioritize innovation and mental health care, including under a plan to target six key areas that will help to boost Canada’s innovation and skills agenda,” Upshall said. “These commitments create opportunities to work with the federal government and open the door to align with Digital Hub efforts to tackle mental health in innovative ways.”

In addition to mental health and innovation, the Digital Hub aligns with government priorities in many ways: trade, digital technology, global affairs and Canada’s place in the world, public safety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), Indigenous, youth, primary care and science.

The APEC Digital Hub for Mental Health will be the centre of an international super cluster of academia and businesses that will provide leadership to Canadians and the 2.8 billion people living in 21 APEC economies as a base of mental health knowledge and innovative service delivery.

“Canada’s mental healthcare community will effectively be on the global front lines of an unprecedented international campaign for mental wellness,” Upshall said. “Through its novel structure and approach, the Hub will serve as a regional incubator of new ideas for not only scientific research,



but also collaborative training and education. We look forward to working with the federal government to tackle the \$50-billion mental healthcare crisis.”

Canada to welcome world to mental health conference

People across the globe will descend on Vancouver as the host city for the APEC Digital Hub for Mental Health’s first conference on June 27-28. The conference, funded in part by the Public Health Agency of Canada, will convene the Digital Hub’s Focus Area committees to address obstacles to mental wellness such as specialist shortages, inadequate prevention programs and limited access to quality care with continuity and effective medication.

“The conference will raise the bar on addressing mental wellness as a global cluster begins. Canada’s leadership on this front is paramount for a successful global partnership,” said Upshall.

Focus areas include: Workplace Wellness and Resilience, Integration with Primary Care and Community Settings, Advocacy and Public Awareness, Vulnerable Communities and Children, Mental Wellness of Indigenous Communities, Disaster Resilience and Trauma and Data Collection and Standardization.

The conference and committee sessions in Vancouver will occur in advance of the APEC Digital Hub Colloquium on the margins of the third APEC Senior Officials meeting in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam in August 2017.

Released video points to patient-first model

Innovation takes many forms. Patient engagement in care is one. For Canada to succeed on mental health we need to move swiftly to implement changes that put the patient first and gets Canadians the care they need. Following the 2017 budget, the APEC Digital Hub took the opportunity to release a new video to explain how the innovative platform will do exactly that. View it here: <http://bit.ly/2oauqkA>

“The Digital Hub will play a vital role at the patient level, helping clinicians use international best practices to treat those suffering from mental illness—making the Hub an applied implementation science backbone,” Upshall said.

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For more information

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Website: <http://mentalhealth.apec.org/>

Video: <http://bit.ly/2oauqkA>

About the APEC Digital Hub

Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) foreign and trade ministers unanimously endorsed the creation of an international “Digital Hub,” to coordinate and promote advanced research from the world’s leading universities and health institutes involved in the diagnosis, treatment and awareness of mental disorders in 2015. Canada was selected to host it in partnership with the Mood Disorders Society of Canada, the University of British Columbia and the University of Alberta.