

## City Council

### Notice of Motion

MM11.12	ACTION			Ward: All
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**Request to the Government of Canada to Commit to National Mental Health Parity and to Invest \$900 Million Per Year to Address Toronto’s Mental Health and Addictions Crises - by Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam, seconded by Councillor Joe Cressy**

*\* Notice of this Motion has been given.  
 \* This Motion is subject to referral to the Executive Committee. A two-thirds vote is required to waive referral.*

### Recommendations

Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam, seconded by Councillor Joe Cressy, recommends that:

1. City Council request the Federal Government to adopt a Mental Health Parity Act to meet the Mental Health Commission of Canada’s target of one dollar spent on mental health services for every dollar spent on physical health, as detailed in the report Advancing the Mental Health Strategy for Canada: A Framework for Action (2017–2022).
2. City Council request the Federal Government to provide \$300 million annually to address Toronto’s mental health and addictions crises, and scale up evidence-based, community-oriented mental health services.
3. City Council request the Federal Government to provide an additional \$600 million annually to the City of Toronto to help build 18,000 new supportive housing units over 10 years.

### Summary

Each year 20 percent of Canadians experience mental health and addiction issues. According to the Mental Health Commission of Canada, by age 40, at least 50 percent will have experienced a mental illness. Seventy-five percent of mental health disorders first appear before the age of 25. Residents, including youth and University of Toronto students have been vocal in identifying the urgent need for increased mental health supports to address a growing mental health crisis. At colleges and universities, the number of students with identified mental health disorders has more than doubled over the past five years. Suicide is the leading cause of death for young people aged 18-35.

In Canada, more than 6.7 million people are living with a mental health problem or illness today, compared to 1.4 million with heart disease and 2.2 million living with diabetes. The inadequate funding of mental health services has both direct and indirect costs to Canada’s

economy that exceed \$50 billion per year.

Toronto represents approximately 10 percent of the country's population and urgently needs to address the mental health and addictions crises in its streets. Under-served populations living with mental health and addiction needs are in crisis and compounding Toronto's affordable housing and shelter emergencies. We need immediate investment in mental health and addiction services, with coordinated strategies at all levels of government, that provide the structures and supports people need to address their health and social issues and create pathways to recovery and stabilization that ultimately improve the health and well-being of our communities.

Mental illness accounts for over 100,000 emergency room visits each year and 12,000 hospitalizations. Emergency room visits for intentional self harm are increasing and Toronto has experienced a 290 percent increase in emergency room visits for opioid poisoning/overdoses and a 181 percent increase in opioid related deaths since 2013.

Led by the Canadian Mental Health Association, on World Mental Health Day 2019, advocates, service providers and community members called upon federal parties to commit to national mental health funding parity and make an annual investment of \$300 million per year in Toronto to immediately address Toronto's mental health and addictions crises. They also repeated a call to the federal government for an increase in social spending by two percent and that Toronto be able to use these funds for supportive housing.

The \$300 million annual funding investment would allow for scaled up evidence-based and community-oriented mental health services. This includes consumption and treatment sites, stepped care, managed opioid programs, increased access to psychotherapy and Housing First services for homeless people experiencing mental health and addiction problems, as well as more help for the 24,000 Toronto Community Housing tenants who lack access to mental health and addiction treatment services. Based on Toronto's population, a two percent increase in social spending would be equivalent to \$600 million per year and these funds could help the City to meet its target of developing 18,000 new supportive housing units over 10 years.

## **Background Information (City Council)**

Member Motion MM11.12