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YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH DURING A GLOBAL PANDEMIC

Policy makers, health practitioners, academics, educators, Indigenous leaders, youth leaders and the general public will come together from August 24 to 26 to discuss youth mental health in the context of COVID-19. The 2020 Atlantic Summer Institute for Healthy and Safe Communities will focus on 'Upstream Investment in Mental Health Promotion: The Solution to the Mental Health Crisis'.

[Charlottetown, PE] The Atlantic Summer Institute for Health and Safe Communities (ASI) will be back this summer for its 6th event in a series on youth mental health promotion. This year, ASI will be **an online** Atlantic Policy Forum on Mental Health Promotion, presented in both English and French. From August 24 to 26, a diverse set of individuals and groups from all four Atlantic provinces and Quebec will discuss how to work together to promote mental health and wellness. Aligned with the online forum, ASI 2020 is featuring a Youth Leadership Program, during which twenty selected youth aged 18-25 will have their voices heard in shaping the future of mental health policy for children and youth in their communities.

Patsy Beattie-Huggan, coordinator of the Forum, says that the COVID-19 pandemic has allowed the public to see governments at different levels working together to quickly develop and deliver policies and programs that protect the lives of our population at large. At the same time, it has exposed our collective vulnerability to the impact of isolation and struggles to preserve mental health. She urges the importance of considering the impact of policies developed during this time as well as examining the opportunities that will emerge. “The pandemic has highlighted the importance of considering mental health when instituting various policies that protect physical health,” she says. “Society needs to have ongoing policies and programs that support positive relationships, social networks, education, adequate income, inclusion, and housing - from infancy to youth to older generations. This is why we need to continue advocating for upstream investment in policies that address the determinants of health and promote mental health in the long term.”



ASI is known for developing programs based on evidence and lived experience, and will again bring together participants and speakers from diverse professions, ages, and cultural backgrounds. In the

context of the pandemic, ASI 2020 will explore: policy and its power in promoting the mental health of Canadians; evidence for upstream policies that promote the health of infants, children and youth; challenges in our current social climate; the impacts of politics and economics on policies and inclusion; and linking local work with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. ASI 2020 will also offer workshops with experts and community leaders from diverse backgrounds across Atlantic Canada and Quebec. Workshops will develop skills in building capacity for upstream policy, influencing policy makers, and implementing policy.

“We have the opportunity mid-pandemic to call for transformative change,” says Beattie-Huggan. “We’re thrilled to welcome Trish Hennessey from Upstream Canada to open the Forum with her keynote presentation highlighting a collectivist vision for an upstream mental health approach, which will be live streamed to the public.”

Participants will hear presentations on the strength of policy in guiding transformative change. As well, participants will engage in conversations about Two-Eyed Seeing as a policy lens, and integrating Indigenous ways of knowing into discussions of policy. They will hear perspectives from youth leaders passionate about mental health, and experience a showcase of Atlantic projects that have demonstrated upstream policy in action.

The Forum will include presenters from Quebec and provide opportunities for engagement in both official languages. Support from the Secrétariat du Québec aux relations canadiennes enables ASI 2020 to be more inclusive and diverse than ever before. Attendees from all areas of French Canada are encouraged to register.

The ASI 2020 program is available online at www.asi-iea.ca.

ASI 2020 is made possible through contributions from: Medavie, Presenting Supporter; TD, Title sponsor of the Youth Leadership Program; Bell Let's Talk, Bronze Sponsor; and a number of local and regional businesses. Generous support has been provided by the Secrétariat du Québec aux relations canadiennes. Organizing Partners include: the Mental Health Commission of Canada; A Way Home; the Atlantic Council for International Cooperation; the Atlantic provincial governments; and the Government of Canada.



FOR MORE INFORMATION, PHOTOS & INTERVIEWS, CONTACT:

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