

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

COMMUNITY PARTNERS JOIN TO END CHILD & YOUTH SUICIDE

First of its kind partnership will work together to build resiliency and better coordinate care for children and youth in Mississauga and Peel

September 10, 2019 (MISSISSAUGA, ON) – Today, on World Suicide Prevention Day, the Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, Christine Elliott, Minister of Education, Stephen Lecce, Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, Todd Smith and Mayor of Mississauga, Bonnie Crombie, joined community leaders to launch Project Now, a partnership that aims to end child and youth suicide in the City of Mississauga and Peel Region.

Project Now has received \$3 million in funding from the Government of Ontario, and will be matched by up to \$6 million in philanthropic support, for a total of \$9 million. To date, Project Now has received over \$3 million in donations from The WB Family Foundation and other leaders in our community. Philanthropic investment will continue to be crucial to the growth and success of this partnership.

Comprised of the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board, Government of Ontario, Peel Children's Centre, Peel District School Board, Peel Public Health and Trillium Health Partners, Project Now was founded to address that despite best efforts too many children and youth attempt suicide and die by suicide in our community. Individually these organizations have all been working diligently to address this but without effective planning, design and implementation in partnership with one another children will continue to fall through the cracks. Partners recognized that if they wanted to tackle this issue in a meaningful way, they needed to think and connect differently. They recognized that while they were seeing some success individually they could have a much greater impact together.

The Zero Suicide systems-thinking approach has been proven effective in areas around the world, such as hospitals in the United States of America. Project Now has learned from best practices around the world and is based on recommendations from global research on multi-sector, systems approach. Project Now has created a project for the community of Mississauga and Peel Region that has the potential to be replicated across Ontario and in other jurisdictions.

Project Now aims to foster hope and resiliency, coordinate access to care options that meet the needs of children, youth, and families, and support healing by building connections that promote learning and understanding about suicide. Every step of the way, Project Now will work in partnership with children, youth, and families in the community who have been impacted by suicide through its Youth and Family League. Their voices, experiences, and wisdom will guide the work of Project Now, providing feedback and advice and actively co-designing project initiatives.

Project Now partners have pledged that, together, they will strive to create a safe, non-stigmatized, and positive environment for children and youth to flourish and thrive, and when vulnerable, find safe supports that they can understand and trust within their community.

If you are a young person experiencing thoughts of self-harm or suicide, or if you know a young person in need of help, please reach out to Kids Help Phone – Text TEXT to 686868, call 1-800-668-6868 or visit kidshelpphone.ca. Available 24/7.

QUICK FACTS:

- In 2018-19, more than 1,100 children and youth (0-18) visited Trillium Health Partners Emergency Departments for mental health supports – a number that is predicted to increase.
- Between 2003 and 2016, emergency department visits for mental illness have more than doubled among individuals aged 0-14 years, and individuals aged 15-24 years.
- According to Peel Regional Police, in 2016, 10 youth died by suicide and 157 youth attempted suicide in Peel Region, an increase in attempts of 52 per cent from 2012.
- Among Peel students in grades 7 to 12, 33% felt like they “did not know who to turn to” when they wanted to discuss mental health or emotional health issues, as stated by the Region of Peel – Public Health.
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death in the world for those aged 15-24 years.

QUOTES:

“Mississauga is a culturally diverse and growing community, where we can all learn from each other and work together to create a bright future for our children and youth. I have been a vocal advocate along with Canada’s big city mayors about the need for all levels of government to invest more in mental health supports for our youth. This investment will ensure our youth have access to mental health supports where and when they need it and will have meaningful impact in helping reduce youth suicide rates in our City.”

Bonnie Crombie, Mayor of Mississauga

“For the first time I am seeing all the right players sitting around the table talking together about suicide, and how to go upstream to ensure our youth never get to crisis. For the first time I am seeing the voices & experiences of family and youth as a critical piece of the equation. For the first time I am feeling hope that we may make a difference.”

Michele Sparling, Chair of Project Now, Youth & Family League, Parent with lived experience

“We know the challenges our students are facing related to their mental health at all different ages. The Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board has been working with our teachers and students to ensure our students have healthy ways of dealing with their emotions, while building capacity in mental health education. For the first time, Project Now will bring together educators directly with the health care providers and community centres to ensure that both in school and outside our children and youth are supported.”

Marianne Mazzorato, Director of Education, Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board

“Together we are making significant strides to improve the personal supports available to children and youth in our community. Peel Children’s Centre has a long history of supporting children and their families and we are pleased to be involved in a partnership that aspires to end child and youth suicide in our community.”

Humphrey Mitchell, CEO of Peel Children’s Centre

“The Peel District School Board became a founding partner of Project Now because, every day, we serve students who need mental health support in the community and who need help to develop resiliency skills. Through Project Now, we will increase awareness of mental health, be better positioned to identify children and youth who need help, and connect them and their families to community resources. We are proud to partner on a project with a bold vision for our community and a practical framework for system-wide transformation that will inspire hope.”

Peter Joshua, Director of Education, Peel District School Board

“This is the first collaboration of its kind and has the potential to make a significant impact in the lives of countless youth within the Region of Peel. Project Now will help coordinate access to care options that meet the needs of children, youth and their families. It is the first time we will be connecting as a whole community to promote learning and understanding about suicide.”

Dr. Jessica Hopkins, Medical Officer of Health for Peel Public Health

“Every day in our hospital we see what happens when children and youth fall through the cracks. We know that we have to think, act and connect differently to drive change in our community. As individual educators, health care providers and community centres we are doing good work to improve the health and well-being of our community but together, we will be the force of change that ends child and youth suicide in Mississauga.”

Michelle DiEmanuele, President & CEO, Trillium Health Partners

PROJECT NOW

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For those interested in donating to Project Now, please contact:

Trillium Health Partners Foundation
(905) 848.7575/ foundation@thp.ca

About Kids Help Phone

Kids Help Phone is Canada's only bilingual 24/7 national service offering professional counselling, information, referrals and volunteer-led text-based support for young people. Kids Help Phone's free, anonymous services are available in both English and French. Kids Help Phone is a registered Canadian charity, and raises the majority of revenue from individuals, foundations, corporations, and community fundraising.