



Mood Disorders Society of Canada
La Société Pour **Les Troubles de L'Humeur** du Canada



a place of mind



**UNIVERSITY OF
ALBERTA**

Investing in science, global partnerships and digital innovation for Canadian economic growth and mental health

2017 Pre-budget submission

Presented by the Mood Disorders Society of Canada, the University of British Columbia and the University of Alberta

(The APEC Digital Hub at UBC)

August 2016

Recommendation

The Government of Canada is well positioned to lead in science, digital innovation and the fight against mental illness by investing \$5-million over five years in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Digital Hub at UBC, an international cluster which will serve as the epicentre of APEC’s plan to promote mental wellness in Canada and across the Asia Pacific.

Executive summary

Canada ranks 13th in innovation among 16 peer countries¹, continuing to be outranked on global productivity and economic growth. The government says it wants to reverse this trend by making Canada an innovation nation. If we are to successfully address the key challenges of our time, we must make partnerships in digital innovations a priority as the government looks ahead.

At the same time, mental illness, which affects one in five Canadians and millions more worldwide, is one of the major drivers of burgeoning costs to health and economic systems. As the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum notes: “Mental health is critical to overall health, social and economic participation, workplace productivity and sustainable economic growth.”

The urgent need to address mental illness is one Canada and the world cannot ignore. Given the digital opportunities afforded to us today, 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. The Hub will provide leadership to Canadians and the 2.8 billion people in 21 countries within APEC, by developing the Hub as a base of mental health knowledge.

Before the last APEC leaders meeting in November 2015, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said, “Canada supports APEC’s open trade agenda and welcomes the work it does to increase prosperity, including opportunities it creates for Canadians. I look forward to working with APEC leaders to further strengthen trade and investment for the region.” There is no better example of creating opportunities for Canada and strengthening the relationship with APEC economies than the Hub. Last November Canada was chosen to host the Hub not only because of our leadership at APEC, but also because of our expertise in global science excellence, working with international partners, developing clusters on important issues and our capacity to compete in a digital world.

The Hub is a practical resource for Canada and the APEC economies that will not only target the intergovernmental aspects at a high level public policy stage, but also at the regional level when it comes to program and service delivery on mental health issues. The Hub will also 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 currently lagging particularly in mental health.

The University of British Columbia will host the Hub, working in collaboration with the University of Alberta and the Mood Disorders Society of Canada (MDSC). With Canada’s leadership, the Hub will serve as the epicentre of APEC’s plan to promote mental wellness across the Asia Pacific. Further, it will create important permanent and

¹ Conference Board of Canada. “How Canada Performs.” Available online: <http://bit.ly/2aTIFpU>

far-reaching exchanges between Canadian mental health researchers across the country and their counterparts in APEC economies.

This project puts Canada's leadership in the fight against mental illness at the forefront while helping Canadians first. The Hub will be available to Canadians to access up to date mental health information that will allow them to discuss their issues with their physicians—the basis for “patient-centred care.” The Hub will also be an incubator for ideas about new research and innovative practices which will impact patient outcomes in Canada. The Hub will generate knowledge shared amongst APEC nations, create products in collaboration with private sector and produce tangible economic benefits in science and innovation.

We are seeking start up funding support from the Government of Canada in the amount of \$5 million over five years as the Hub begins its work in earnest. The initial financial contribution from our own government would signal to the world that Canada is in fact leading the way and making digital and science innovation in mental health a top priority and tackling a \$51-billion problem here at home. Canada's work would be showcased in the upcoming meetings in Peru in November 2016 where APEC leaders will meet to discuss progress. As Canada celebrates its 150th birthday, it would be a prime opportunity to demonstrate how we are leading in economic growth because of our investments in digital innovation in the global fight against mental illness.

Global Science Excellence

Canada's future depends on excelling in innovative scientific discoveries and applications. Canada's leadership on the Hub will be a catalyst for scientific discoveries to fill knowledge gaps that will be shared among the Hub's international partners. For example, massive databases internationally with complex data sets and analysis on world-class brain research, international best practices and global breakthroughs in early intervention and treatments are currently inaccessible. Through the Hub, Canadians suffering with mental disorders will benefit from this research.

In addition, Canada's mental healthcare community will effectively be on the global front lines of an unprecedented international campaign for mental wellness. 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. Scientific research will also address obstacles to mental wellness such as specialist shortages, inadequate prevention programs and limited access to quality care with continuity and effective medication.

Canada and its APEC partners are facing similar obstacles to mental health; however, with strong support from the Canadian government, our role as host and a donor country will help ensure the Hub's program includes issues of particular relevance to Canada. Some of these issues include addressing mental wellness among indigenous peoples, helping middle class Canadians suffering depression in the workplace and supporting military veterans dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder. Through this lens, the Hub allows Canadian leaders in government, NGOs and the healthcare industry an opportunity to be at the forefront of an international approach to fighting mental illness. We can help shape the global mental health landscape based on our economic needs and Canadian innovations.

Demand for more scientific research in the mental health care space—whether it be in the form of new, innovative medicines to treat illness or discovering more about the brain—is ever increasing and our Hub partners are well positioned to lead.

World Leading Clusters and Partnerships

In today's digitally connected world, overcoming obstacles to mental wellness is best achieved through multi-stakeholder collaboration and public-private partnerships. The Hub program will create a web-based platform to facilitate the exchange of international best practice models, assess specific interventions and inform the launch of new pilot collaborations. All stakeholders across Canada and other APEC member economies—governments, academic institutions, industry practitioners and professional groups—will be encouraged to engage in this exchange.

APEC finance ministers in 2014 made establishing public-private partnerships a focus in order to promote capacity building and project implementation across its 21 member states. Because of this priority, the Hub is an important platform to engage business and industry leaders in intergovernmental operations and initiatives and build capacity around increased mental health innovations within the private sector in partnership with the public sector.

The APEC Digital Hub at UBC will be the centre of a super cluster of academic and businesses that have a focus on knowledge creation and knowledge translation within the areas of mental health and mental illness. But already, we've partnered with dynamic institutions and government ministries including: Peking University, Janssen Asia-Pacific, Malaysia Ministry of Health, Indonesia Ministry of Health, Japan National Institute of Mental Health, Philippines National Centre for Mental Health, University of the Philippines – Manila, Mexico National Institute of Psychiatry, Peru Ministry of Health and National Institute of Mental Health and the list continues to grow. A targeted investment by the Government of Canada of \$5 million will ensure that Canada remains at the forefront of brain research and in particular mental health research and that our partnerships will be global in nature.

Competing in a Digital World

As an interactive platform, the Hub is designed to enhance awareness, share information and experiences, develop customized curricula and facilitate the identification and implementation of best practices. If we consider the APEC economies as a testing centre, the Hub's role is to bring people together digitally on several different control points. Specifically, the APEC community has urban, rural, remote and indigenous communities with different levels of access to technology. The same can be said in Canada with our different populations and lack of broadband access in some parts of the country. Through the Hub, scientists, researchers, businesses and governments can use data related to their demographic and geography in order to develop their own models, innovations and discoveries when it comes to mental health. Canadians can benefit not only from the information, but also on the research and development side as it will be easier to commercialize products throughout APEC economies. At a basic level, the Hub will also use its digital and accessible platform to train people around models of care in mental health.

The very fact that Canada was chosen to host the Hub proves that in the area of digital development and innovation, we are strong leaders. The Hub will provide the opportunity for instantaneous communication that would otherwise occur only over longer periods of time and only within specific partnerships that do not amount to a "cluster" and which are highly cost ineffective as we move into the digital economy. The government's \$5 million start up funding will help maintain Canada's leadership in this critical area of digital knowledge creation and will ensure we remain at the top in the field. There is no doubt the Hub will offer patients greater knowledge with regard to available treatments for mental illnesses and therefore more choice. This clearly gives Canada's research institutions a competitive edge. The world's digital infrastructure is developing at breakneck speed and at the centre is the Hub. An investment from the Canadian government will help further the Hub's ability to be a successful digital platform for mental health innovations.

Conclusion

If innovation is truly to become a Canadian value, there is no better opportunity than to start with the APEC Digital Hub at UBC. In today's digitally interconnected world, we must look to new innovations to address some of the greatest challenges of our time such as mental illness. As a strong partner at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, Canada is well-positioned to lead in innovative ways in the global fight against mental illness.

The Hub is an important platform for Canadian scientists, innovators, businesses, industry, health institutes and governments to share knowledge, research, data, public policies and best practices while helping those suffering from mental illness and contributing to economic growth. In the process, we will be shaping mental healthcare through global science excellence and world-leading partnerships and clusters that will allow us to successfully compete in the digital world. As the host country, Canada will work with its APEC partners to create products in collaboration with the public and private sectors and produce tangible economic benefits in science and innovation.

A \$5 million investment in the Hub from the government is vital to Canada's economic growth and to our efforts to address mental illness at home and abroad.