

**Office of the Regional Chair and CEO
The Regional Municipality of Durham**



Statement

from the Regional Chair

28 July 2015

October Proclaimed Mental Illness Awareness Month in Durham Region

Whitby, Ontario – Last week at a luncheon held at Durham's own Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences, I had the privilege of meeting and listening to the personal story of an outstanding Canadian athlete and advocate for mental health awareness, Sheldon Kennedy. I was pleased to proclaim that October will be Mental Illness Awareness Month in Durham Region.

I have invited the Mayors of Durham Region's eight area municipalities to make the same declaration locally. We also challenged MPs and MPPs from across Durham to get involved. I have reached out to the Premier of Ontario in hopes that she will add the province's voice to this conversation, as well as to Mr. Kennedy's hometown Mayor of Calgary to further broaden the basis of our intergovernmental dialogue. It is this ongoing public discussion that will eventually help to remove the stigma attached to mental illness.

As a major employer, Durham Region is committed to supporting a healthy workplace, including mental health awareness, policies, training and treatment available to staff. Our wellness programs include presentations by prominent guest speakers with powerful stories to share, classes in mindful meditation, departmental awareness sessions and mental health first aid courses that are offered throughout the year. Together, these initiatives will form the basis for an overarching commitment to mental health. While we will focus on awareness and prevention measures formally during the month of October, our suite of activities and the incorporation of mental health into our annual workplace and occupational health and safety administration policies ensures that attention is paid to this important issue throughout the year.

I encourage all Durham Region residents to consider their own mental health, as well as that of their friends, family and colleagues, in the same manner that you would pay attention and offer assistance to support their physical health and well-being. Awareness and education are the keys to continuing to build a stronger, more resilient community.

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