For immediate release

Bell Let’s Talk Day 2017 is one for the record books with 131,705,010 total messages of support – and $6,585,250.50 more funding for Canadian mental health

- Clara Hughes leads the biggest mental health conversation ever from Canada to the world
- Social media engagement on Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook more than triples
- Royalty, political leaders, sports heroes, corporations and competitors, entertainers and other celebrities in Canada and around the globe embrace the cause
- On the way to $100 million: Bell’s total donation to mental health now at $86,504,429.05

MONTRÉAL, January 26, 2017 – It’s official! Bell Let’s Talk Day 2017 has set all-new records with unprecedented participation in Canada’s national conversation about mental health, the largest of its kind in the world. People in Canada and around the globe joined with Clara Hughes and the Bell Let’s Talk team to talk about mental health like never before.

“Wow Canada! Thank you! We’ve shattered records again with a mental health discussion that reached every corner of Canada and points all around the world too. We keep on knocking holes in the dark wall that is stigma, and we keep on growing funding for new research and expanded care as the engagement builds and builds,” said Clara. “It’s amazing to see the passion and positivity all around as we speak openly about the impact of mental illness on each of us. I’ve talked to so many people whose lives have been made better by our conversation, and I pass their thanks to you. Because you make it happen!”

Over the 28.5 hours from midnight Newfoundland time to midnight Pacific time, there were 131,705,010 total Bell Let’s Talk interactions, including texts, mobile calls and long distance calls by Bell customers, tweets using the #BellLetsTalk hashtag on Twitter, views of the Facebook Bell Let’s Talk video, Instagram posts using the #BellLetsTalk hashtag, and Snapchats with the Bell Let’s Talk geofilter – a 4.6% increase over the 125,915,295 total on Bell Let’s Talk Day 2016.

With Snapchat and Instagram joining Twitter and Facebook as Bell Let’s Talk partners, total social media interactions almost tripled, from 7,409,845 messages of support in 2016 to 22,008,855 this year. #BellLetsTalk was the top Twitter trend in Canada and worldwide.

Bell donates 5 cents per interaction, at no extra charge to participants, so the result is a further $6,585,250.50 in funding for Canadian mental health programs.

Bell Let’s Talk Day once again drew support from Canada’s most prominent leaders including Governor General David Johnston and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau as well as the Royal family with tweets from the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge Will and Kate and Prince Harry. Prime Minister Trudeau also joined in on a live Twitter chat with Clara and Bell Let’s Talk spokesperson Marie-Soleil Dion to share his perspectives on mental health.

The scope of engagement in Bell Let’s Talk Day has become truly remarkable. Political party leaders, members of Parliament, provincial and territorial premiers and ministers, mayors and councillors, Olympians, professional sports teams and players in Canada and the US, major
corporations and a broad range of the most high-profile Canadian, US and global entertainers and other celebrities continue to embrace the anti-stigma cause.

Their participation drove hundreds of thousands of retweets from fans and followers. To see the amazing level of support, please visit Bell.ca/LetsTalk.

The 2017 Bell Let’s Talk team
Led by Clara, the Bell Let’s Talk team was busy all across the country on Bell Let’s Talk Day appearing on media outlets, speaking at and hosting events, visiting students and young people, and performing concerts, all to shine a spotlight on mental health.

TSN host Michael Landsberg, comedian Howie Mandel, entertainer Mary Walsh, and Québec personalities Stefie Shock and Michel Mpambara, singer-songwriter Serena Ryder, actor Marie-Soleil Dion and retired CFL player Étienne Boulay, professional golfer Andrew Jensen, comedian and writer Kevin Breel, CFL veteran Shea Emry, musician Robb Nash, Toronto Maple Leafs Head Coach Mike Babcock, music producer Bob Ezrin, Concordia Stingers hockey team assistant captain Philippe Hudon, singer-songwriter Séan McCann and Afghanistan veteran Bruno Guévremont, all shared their own mental health stories, encouraging Canadians around the country to join in.

“On behalf of everyone involved in Bell Let’s Talk and all those the initiative supports, I’d like to convey our immense gratitude to everyone who participated in a day of such wonderful progress for Canadian mental health,” said Mary Deacon, Chair of Bell Let’s Talk. “To Clara and team, to all the partners who helped carry the message forward, to the students who led the charge at campuses nationwide, to all of you who shared your time and your stories: your passion for the cause is making all the difference for people who struggle with a mental illness in their lives and all those who support them. Thank you everyone!”

Canadian student-athletes make a really big noise
With more than 20,000 student-athletes at 54 universities leading the mental health conversation, Bell Let’s Talk was a focus for Canadian campuses. Student-athletes recorded a series of inspirational videos about mental health, and more than 100 Bell Let’s Talk themed university sports games took place through January and on Bell Let’s Talk Day. They also led the charge on Canada’s largest ever Thunderclap on the social media crowdspeaking platform, which allows a single message to be shared en masse. With 5,479 people registered and a social reach of 6,003,469, yesterday’s Bell Let’s Talk Day Thunderclap wasn’t just the largest ever in Canada, it was the biggest ever for mental health around the world.

Thank you to partners and friends
Bell Let’s Talk extends a huge thank you to the hundreds of Canadian corporations, hospitals and universities, governments, the Canadian Armed Forces, professional sports teams and associations, community and mental health partners, chambers of commerce, and schools, colleges and universities across Canada that joined the conversation through events, promotions and advertising, social media, newsletters and websites.

Your engagement at work
With every interaction on Bell Let’s Talk Day driving increased Bell donations to mental health programs around the country, Canadians are having a direct and positive impact on the lives of people living with mental health issues.

There’s no doubt views on mental health are changing; 4 in 5 Canadians say they’re more aware of mental health issues since Bell Let’s Talk began in 2010. Since then, the initiative has supported more than 700 organizations around Canada providing mental health services and support; 3,500 individuals from military families have benefited from Bell True Patriot Love Fund projects; 4,200 frontline mental health staff have been trained; more than 640,000 people have received mental health care and supports through a Bell Let’s Talk funded program, including more than 200,000 children and youth; and over 1 million callers to crisis and distress centres have received help through programs supported by Bell Let’s Talk.

Bell helped fund the world’s first national workplace mental health and safety standard, and was one of the first to adopt it, with some 10,000 Bell managers having completed compulsory mental health training to date. Bell also partnered with Morneau Shepell and Queen’s University to develop the world’s first university-certified workplace mental health training program, now in use at more than 340 companies.

New Bell Let’s Talk projects
In the lead up to Bell Let’s Talk Day this year, Clara and other members of the Bell Let’s Talk team announced several new projects in January: a $1 million donation, matched by provincial government funding in each Atlantic province, to expand the work of the Strongest Families Institute in the region; the renewal of the $1 million Bell Canada Mental Health and Anti-Stigma Research Chair at Queen’s University; $300,000 to two health foundations in Québec’s Lanaudière region to support developing services tailored to clients in the region with mental health problems; a $250,000 gift to McGill University’s Montreal Neurological Institute and Hospital to help improve access to mental health services focused on the needs of multicultural communities, and $250,000 for a new mental health program to be delivered by Nunavut’s Embrace Life Council; and $150,000 in funding for St. John Ambulance to incorporate a mental health module in its standard and emergency first aid courses.

The Bell Let’s Talk Community Fund
The annual Bell Let’s Talk Community Fund supports frontline organizations improving access to mental health programs and services in every region of Canada. Applications are now being accepted for the 2017 Bell Let’s Talk Community Fund. The 2017 application period is open until March 31 and all 2017 Fund grants will be disbursed before December 31, 2017. To apply for 2017 funding, please visit Bell.ca/LetsTalk.

About Bell Let’s Talk
Bell Let’s Talk promotes mental health based on 4 action pillars: anti-stigma, care and access, new research, and workplace best practices. Bell Let’s Talk was launched in September 2010 as a 5-year program with a $50 million initial donation from Bell and a commitment to grow its funding based on the engagement of Canadians in the cause on Bell Let’s Talk Day. In September 2015, Bell announced it would extend the initiative a further 5 years and commit to at least $100 million in funding for Canadian mental health.

To learn more about Bell Let’s Talk, please visit Bell.ca/LetsTalk.
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