

## **Caucus Protocol**

Approved Oct 25, 2010

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"People with experience of the mental health system frequently report that they are the voice least heard, both as individuals and at the systems level. ....Having a say in matters that most affect you is essential to everyone's sense of well being and citizenship. Groups that are entirely made up of the people for which they speak are uniquely empowering. They constitute a vital resource for communities that typically are talked about but seldom talked to." (*Senator M. Kirby, Out of the Shadows At Last, Transforming Mental Health. Mental Illness and Addiction Services in Canada, May 2006*)

**Purpose:** to outline the roles and responsibilities of the Caucus in relation to the meaningful engagement of PWLE in all aspects of the MHCC At Home/Chez Soi project, Toronto Site, towards ensuring that the project is successful. A successful project includes ensuring that the perspective of PWLE informs all aspects of the project.

**Background:** The City of Toronto as the Service Lead accessed MHCC funding in its contract to support the meaningful engagement of People With Lived Experience (PWLE) in all aspects of the Toronto At Home/Chez Soi project including governance, support services, research and communications. A Toronto PWLE Caucus has been formed for this purpose with approximately 19 volunteer members. The Caucus is represented in all Project Committees and Work Groups. The autonomy of the Caucus to carry out its prescribed duties within the overall parameters of the Project objectives will be supported by all Parties.

Although the funding has been allocated through the City of Toronto contract with MHCC, all parties involved in the Toronto Project are responsible for ensuring that people with lived experience of mental illness and homelessness collaborate in the planning and delivery of all supports and services. The Caucus is the primary mechanism by which this objective will be achieved in Toronto.

### **Primary Duties of the Caucus:**

1. To send informed PWLE representatives to all working groups and committees of the MHCC Toronto site project who will provide advice and input from a PWLE perspective on issues and on the direction of the project in order to make this project successful
2. To hold monthly Caucus meetings throughout the duration of the project
  1. to ensure all Caucus members are informed and up to date on the current issues of the MHCC Toronto Site Research project,
  2. to receive feedback from PWLE representatives assigned to SOT and various working groups
  3. to develop the official PWLE Caucus responses to issues raised by the MHCC Toronto Site Research project
  4. to ensure Caucus members get information and access to training and skills development in order to be highly skilled,

knowledgeable individuals with personal experience of homelessness and mental health issues

3. To document the process of establishing the Caucus in order to develop a model of engagement of PWLE that can be replicated for other projects
4. Participate as requested on related local and national initiatives related to the project.

Related Documents:

- MHCC Toronto Site Submission
- Consultants Report : Involving People with Lived Experience in the Mental Health Commission of Canada Toronto Demonstration Site Project
- Caucus Code of Conduct, Sept. 2009
- MHCC RFP

**Our operating principles:**

We believe that our engagement in this project will help to ensure the best possible involvement of all 560 participants, and will support and inspire all parties involved to ensure that PWLE positively influence the project.

- **Autonomy:** refers to the PWLE caucus operating as a separate governance structure in support of the Toronto project. Advice provided by the PWLE caucus shall be the best possible advice, and may include constructive criticism. To ensure its deliberations are unfettered, only individuals on the Caucus or invited to a meeting may attend. Minutes of meetings shall be submitted to SOT, and are confidential as they are intended to be advisory to SOT. SOT may at its own discretion make all or part of the Caucus minutes public.
- **Respect:** refers to the need for all PWLE Caucus members to conduct themselves in a manner that respects all other members of the Caucus and the MHCC project, and that discriminatory behaviour will be considered unacceptable.
- **Inclusion:** refers to the idea that all members of the Caucus should have access to information and opportunities and should be involved and consulted at all levels of the project.

**Funding and Support for Caucus:**

The City of Toronto as Service Coordinator and as authorized by City of Toronto Council and the MHCC has hired an agency trustee, Ontario Council of Alternative Businesses (OCAB), to receive funds and administer the establishment of a Caucus to ensure the meaningful engagement of people with lived experience in all aspects of the MHCC project. As the trustee agency OCAB will provide all services and supports to the PWLE Caucus as required by the Service Coordinator in relation to any and all aspects of the Program including governance, support services, research and communications. OCAB will also

- (a) hire, employ, remunerate, support and supervise a PWLE Caucus Coordinator. Key responsibilities of the Caucus Coordinator include:

- a. development communications plan that will ensure effective communication between PWLE Caucus and the Toronto Site MHCC demonstration project
  - b. development of policies and implementation of same for participation of Caucus representatives on working groups, committees, conferences, etc. to maximize PWLE engagement
  - c. develop and implement a training needs assessment, and based on findings, develop a training plan for approval by the PWLE Caucus
- (b) in partnership with the PWLE Caucus Coordinator, prepare and submit reports required by the City of Toronto, including quarterly financial reports;
  - (c) in partnership with the PWLE Caucus Coordinator, develop and implement processes for payments to the members of the PWLE Caucus, which are in keeping with standards established by the City of Toronto for payment of honorariums and provision of TTC tokens;
  - (d) work with the PWLE Caucus Coordinator to determine PWLE Caucus training needs and work with the PWLE Caucus Coordinator to provide any training required to satisfy these needs,
  - (e) work with the PWLE Caucus Coordinator to provide all necessary or required administrative support for the PWLE Caucus, including the preparation of any reports, documentation, work plans, achievements, best practices and a communications strategy for the dissemination of PWLE Caucus activities to the broader community.
  - (f) report to SSHA, City of Toronto as required under their contract and include in that report documentation of any training provided, successes and challenges in establishing the Caucus, issues discussed at the Caucus, decisions and rulings by the Caucus. These reports shall be shared with SOT; and
  - (g) gather information that can be used as a guide to establish a caucus advisory group consisting of people with lived experience, outlining ways to ensure that groups such as this remain sustainable and effective and providing principles for working respectfully with PWLE.

### **Honoraria and Travel Costs**

The Toronto Site acknowledges that the expert advice of PWLE should be compensated. It has been agreed that compensation will be in the form of honoraria and transportation costs. These shall be paid by the Trustee Agency at a rate of \$15 per hour and 2 TTC tokens/tickets to travel within Toronto for attendance at all Caucus meetings, Caucus training sessions, and MHCC Toronto site At Home/Chez Soi work groups and committee meetings.

Any changes to the amount of the honorarium will be considered and negotiated by the City of Toronto, the Trustee agency and the Caucus, and must be reviewed in the context of the overall budget.

The honorariums and TTC tokens/tickets will be paid to the PWLE Caucus member on the day and at the time of the meeting attended by the Caucus Coordinator. Records of

who received honorariums and TTC will be maintained for audit purposes. Where the Caucus Coordinator is unable to attend an OCAB designate will be sent in their place.

Any honoraria to be paid for attendance at special meetings, conferences, and events outside of regularly scheduled Caucus meetings and MHCC Toronto site work group meetings must be negotiated ahead of time with the City of Toronto and the Agency Trustee on a case by case basis. Decisions about who will participate in activities to be remunerated by the trustee shall be made by the trustee, in consultation as required with the City and/or the Caucus. Requests for PWLE representation shall be submitted to the Caucus Coordinator who will present to the Trustee.

### **Purpose of Caucus meetings**

The PWLE Caucus is an advisory group to the At Home/Chez Soi project in Toronto, with the goal of supporting successful project implementation. It works as a sounding board for members to air concerns and propose solutions on issues raised within the At Home/Chez Soi project.

The PWLE Caucus members also discuss and decide what the official Caucus position will be on any issues related to the project. The SOT and any working group established by the SOT may request the Caucus to provide advice on issues. This request is generally made through the PWLE representatives on the respective working group / SOT – the PWLE representatives are responsible for bringing forward the issues, and reporting back to the respective working group / SOT.

To be effective in supporting the Toronto project, the Caucus needs to be effective itself. Therefore, meetings are also used to help support the effective operations and participation of the caucus in the Toronto project, through activities such as identifying training needs, other supports and guidance to PWLE members in order to help them to be effective participants in the Caucus and project working groups.

### **Principals for Attendance at Caucus meetings**

PWLE Caucus members meet monthly with the Caucus Coordinator and representative from the Trustee Agency to share and discuss issues from all working group meetings, the Local Advisory Committee, and the Site Operations Team.

Caucus members are responsible to adhere to the Caucus code of conduct as established by the Caucus in September 2009

Attendance at Caucus meetings is limited to Caucus members and invited guests.

Anyone wishing to be on the Caucus agenda should email their request to the Caucus coordinator, who will organize a date and time when the Caucus is available.

Caucus members, in consultation with the Caucus Coordinator, may invite people from working groups, SOT, etc. to attend for clarification on concerns or issues.

### **Caucus Membership:**

The Caucus will have a minimum of 15 members and a maximum of 20 members.

Membership will be as reflective as possible of the ethno racial diversity in Toronto.

New members will be recruited by the Caucus Coordinator in an interview process and selected based on the following criteria as prescribed by the Coordinating Committee of the Caucus:

- their lived experience and understanding of issues related to mental health, addictions and homelessness,
- their familiarity working with diverse communities and experience working in large groups.
- their commitment to anti discrimination and principles of diversity
- their understanding and support for the MHCC At Home/Chez Soi Toronto Site Project

The Caucus member's term will last for the duration of the MHCC project (March 31, 2013) providing they fulfil Caucus requirements.

The Caucus Coordinator and Trustee Agency will have the responsibility to remove Caucus members who cannot fulfil the meeting requirements or adhere to the Caucus code of conduct. If a Caucus member disagrees with this decision, they can appeal in writing no more than 14 days from the date they are relieved of their position to the City of Toronto liaison.

### **Appeals to the Removal of a Caucus member**

If a Caucus member wishes to appeal his/her removal from the caucus and has written a request for an appeal no more than 14 days from the date they were relieved of their Caucus position an appeals board will be struck, comprised of:

- one member of the Caucus selected randomly,
- one representative of the City, and
- one representative from SOT (preferably a service team representative).

The individual making the appeal would be required to submit, in writing, their reasons for making the appeal and submit their reasons to the City, copied to the Caucus Coordinator & Trustee. In the case of the person not feeling comfortable putting their concerns in writing, they may request assistance in preparing their response to the Caucus Coordinator, and the Caucus Coordinator will access support to help them write their submission. If the concern is with the Caucus Coordinator or OCAB, the individual may request assistance from the City liaison. The Caucus Coordinator & Trustee would review the reasons, and reply in writing to the City and the appellant. The appellant may at that time either (a) respond in writing - in which case the appeal board will be struck to consider the matter further using whatever approach they believe is most appropriate under the circumstances or (b) withdraw their appeal. Any decision made by the appeal board would be mandatory for trustee/Caucus Coordinator to implement.

### **Role of Caucus as an Advisory Board to the MHCC At Home /Chez Soi project**

Caucus member representatives will be attending all working group meetings, the Local Advisory Committee and the Site Operations team to provide input from the perspective of PWLE on the project and also to advise the project on the official Caucus position on issues.

Although funded under the City's MHCC contract, the PWLE Caucus is a resource and support to all parties delivering the project in Toronto. Parties are encouraged to use the Caucus as a resource and sounding board, and the Caucus commits to providing whatever support it can to the parties in working with and understanding the perspective of PWLE. In addition to communications through SOT and working group representatives, the parties (CRICH, City of Toronto and its sub-contractor for Housing –

Housing Connections, TNSS, COTA Health and Across Boundaries) are welcome to contact the Caucus Coordinator whenever they wish. In addition, the Caucus will be considering pro-active approaches it may take to support the parties, such as training.

### **Role of the Caucus Member Representatives on Working Groups**

Specific PWLE Caucus member representatives will be chosen and assigned by the Caucus to attend, participate in and report back to the PWLE Caucus on each working group and committee meeting of the Toronto site At Home Chez Soi project.

At these meetings the Caucus members will identify themselves as representing the Caucus.

Caucus member representatives will receive support and coaching from the PWLE Caucus coordinator or Trustee Agency representative in order to fulfil their role as Caucus member representative.

The Caucus member representatives will provide meaningful, accurate and helpful updates about Caucus activities, and provide advice from a PWLE perspective to their respective committees. They will also provide accurate and timely updates to the Caucus from their respective working groups or committees. They will report back to their respective working group on feedback/advice from the Caucus.

If a Caucus member misses three consecutive meetings, he/she will be asked to resign his/her position – unless a valid reason is provided to the Caucus Coordinator and accepted. If two full meetings are missed, the Caucus Coordinator will check in with the representative to ensure that they can continue their role.

The Caucus Coordinator will attend meetings of SOT, LAC and Working-groups, as required, to provide support, coaching and mentoring to the Caucus representatives on those groups.

### **Other roles of the Caucus**

Any requested Caucus member attendance at special meetings, conferences, and events outside of regularly scheduled Caucus meetings and MHCC Toronto site work group meetings must be negotiated ahead of time with the Agency Trustee. The Agency Trustee shall consult with the City of Toronto as required to ensure such activities are consistent with the Trustee's contractual obligations. These decisions for attendance at special events will be made on a case by case basis, and will include consideration of the budget.

The Caucus will participate in any Research about the Caucus and the value of PWLE engagement in the development and implementation of policies and programs.

### **Media Inquiries and Media Communications**

All media inquiries received by the Caucus and OCAB around the MHCC At Home/Chez Soi project will be referred to the City of Toronto as the caucus mandate is as an advisory committee and not a direct media representative of the MHCC At Home/Chez Soi Toronto site project. The City will decide if the caucus will participate in media activities, and will consult with SOT and/or the Toronto Site Coordinator as appropriate. Any Caucus communications extended externally to the community or general public will be cleared by the City, and then submitted to the MHCC Toronto Site Coordinator for approval, and shall follow the media guidelines set out by the MHCC.

### **Communications and Presentations by Caucus Members**

From time to time, the Caucus may be asked to send a member(s) to speak at a public event. Where the primary purpose is to speak about the MHCC project, the Caucus Coordinator will notify the City (Pat Anderson or Elaine Ebach) and the Site Coordinator about the request with information about how it will be handled (i.e. who's speaking; information about the event; types of questions asked; etc.). After the event, information about how it went, including a copy of the presentation if possible, will be sent to the City and MHCC Site Coordinator.

Individual members of the Caucus may be asked to speak at public events, where the primary reason they have been asked has to do with aspects of their lives other than MHCC, and/or the primary purpose is not MHCC. It is not necessary to report on these events/requests. The Caucus Coordinator may report these at the SOT if she is aware of the event, and believes it would be useful to the project to provide information about it (for example, a situation where the primary purposes wasn't MHCC, but in questioning the Member had a lot of questions/comments about MHCC).

### **Communications Plan**

The Caucus will develop a communications plan for the purpose of providing information about the MHCC At Home/Chez Soi project to the broader community of people with lived experience of homelessness and mental illness, including opportunities to present as requested by SOT about the project. Any such communications plan will be submitted to SOT for its approval, consistent with the overall communications & media protocols for the Toronto site.

An overall communications plan is being developed to increase and improve communications with all MHCC project partners:

- who to contact when issues arise
- training and communication skills
- caucus website and other public communications.

External communications would also require national approval, to be coordinated by the Site Coordinator.

Once share point is figured out the Caucus would like to have a presence on it and will discuss this with the Toronto Site Coordinator and the National MHCC

### **Complaint Process**

Any concerns or complaints about individual Caucus members or the Caucus itself should be put in writing and directed to the Caucus Coordinator.

Any concerns or complaints about the Caucus Coordinator should be put in writing and directed to the Agency Trustee Executive Director.

Any concerns or complaints about the Agency Trusteeship of the Caucus should be put in writing and directed to the City of Toronto.

### **Communication with National Consumer Group**

The Caucus Coordinator will participate on the National Consumer Panel. Other approaches for communicating with the NCP shall be considered.

