

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## National plan focused on early interventions in Child and Youth Mental Health unveiled by Canada's Children's Hospital Foundations

*Early intervention programs to be implemented at 13 of Canada's children's hospitals for children, youth and families struggling with mental health challenges*

- 20 per cent of Canadian youth are affected by mental illness, but only one in five receives the mental health services they need<sup>1</sup>
- Canada's Children's Hospital Foundations has partnered with Sobeys Inc. and the Sobeys Foundation to create "A Family of Support," an initiative that builds a Canada-wide circle of care for child and youth mental health
- 13 children's hospitals across Canada will launch new early intervention mental health and education programs to support their local communities' most urgent child and youth mental health needs
- This early intervention plan is the first time Canada's Children's Hospital Foundations and its national network of 13 children's hospital foundations are uniting behind one critical cause for families

**Vaughan, ON,** – Today, Canada's Children's Hospital Foundations (CCHF) is pleased to announce the launch of a groundbreaking partnership to address the critical need for early interventions in child and youth mental health. "**A Family of Support**" **Child and Youth Mental Health Initiative** will fund local mental health programs to support specific provincial needs at 13 Canadian children's hospitals.

"Partnerships like this matter," said Mark Hierlihy, President and CEO, Canada's Children's Hospital Foundations. "Mental health challenges continue to pose an enormous threat to Canadian families from coast to coast and children and youth are among the most vulnerable. Sobeys has recognized the importance of this issue in communities where their employees live and work and, as a family-focused company, want to invest in a national initiative focused on child and youth mental health."

Children, youth, and families struggling with mental health challenges routinely visit children's hospitals for support. As a result, children's hospitals face an unprecedented demand for their services in mental health. Early interventions for children, youth and their families are key to preventing long-term struggles with mental illness. Unfortunately, the impacts of COVID-19 have resulted in an even greater need for child and youth mental health services.

"This initiative puts the brightest minds together to create tangible, meaningful impact in child and youth mental health, where early intervention is critical," said Dr. Ronald Cohn, President and CEO, The Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids). "According to the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI), between 2006-2007 and 2017-2018, there was a staggering 75 per cent increase in emergency department visits by children and youth for mental health conditions. This initiative will enhance capacity and availability of hospital-based mental health services to children and youth with an aim to improve outcomes and, reduce stress among families struggling with mental health issues."

Early intervention and education are at the heart of each hospital's programs and CCHF will share progress and impacts of the initiative on a regular basis. The programs aim to help children's hospitals

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<sup>1</sup>Mental Health Commission of Canada (2013). Making the case for investing in mental health in Canada.

reduce patient wait times, create, and adapt clinical spaces, expand capacity across the healthcare system and enhance training for mental health leaders, pediatricians and frontline healthcare workers. Each of Canada's 13 children's hospital foundations will have the flexibility to allocate funds to their highest-priority mental health early intervention needs.

Sobeys Inc. and the Sobey Foundation has supported a number of children's hospitals across Canada, among them the IWK Health Centre in Halifax, Nova Scotia. "I am so proud that one of Canada's leading companies with roots in Atlantic Canada is also making a major commitment to 13 of Canada's children's hospitals through this national partnership," says Jennifer Gillivan, President & CEO, IWK Foundation and Chair, CCHF Board of Directors. "I have witnessed first-hand the tremendous impact Sobeys has made in communities, both here at home and across Canada. This national initiative is groundbreaking and highlights Sobeys' strong local values and commitment as a family-focused company."

To fund the "A Family of Support" initiative, the Sobey Foundation and Sobeys Inc. have committed to donating and raising millions of dollars. Funding from the initiative will help enhance access to high-quality, long-term mental health care for families across Canada.

"This initiative brings these two legacies together to support a mammoth need among Canadian families. Our stores have an incredible legacy of contributing to their local communities and the wonderful Sobey family, through their foundation, has a proud history of championing mental health challenges," said Michael Medline, President & CEO, Empire. "We're grateful to Heather Sobey-Connors for continuously championing this vital cause. We had started our work on this initiative before the COVID-19 pandemic and now the need has grown even greater. Together with the Sobey Foundation, CCHF, our teammates, customers, and suppliers, we will build healthier tomorrows for generations to come."

Canadians will have the opportunity to donate to the "A Family of Support" initiative through an in-store fundraising campaign running from September 17 to October 1 at Sobeys Inc. banner stores including: Sobeys, Safeway, IGA, Farm Boy, Foodland, FreshCo, Lawton's Drugs, Thrifty Foods, Co-op, Need's Convenience, Pete's Frootique & Fine Foods, IGA Express, Sobeys Express, Rachelle Béry, and Voisin. Marchés Tradition and Bonichoix will run their fundraising campaign later this year. One hundred per cent of the funds raised will support local children's hospitals and their "A Family of Support" program.

"Now, perhaps more than any other time in recent history, people need to know that there are forces hard at work to carve out a clear path for mental health care and education," said Heather Sobey-Connors, Chair of the Sobey Family Council and Sobey Foundation Trustee. "The Sobey Foundation. "For too long, the path has been littered with obstacles and challenges for Canadian families. We have a responsibility to come together and be there for our children, and act as a dedicated support system to ensure they are not alone."

Canada's children's hospitals see over 5,000 children and youth each day and are home to world-leading experts whose research aims to put new knowledge and tools in the hands of frontline child healthcare providers. The children's hospitals depend on the support of community partners to spearhead a long overdue shift in our healthcare system, one that will promote healthier and more resilient families for generations to come.

For a full summary of all 13 programs, please visit [afamilyofsupport.com](http://afamilyofsupport.com).

### **About Canada's Children's Hospital Foundations**

Canada's Children's Hospital Foundations (CCHF), established in 2017, is a not-for-profit organization that raises funds for a national network of hospital foundations as the largest single, non-government funder of child health in Canada. CCHF continues to receive generous support through donors within Children's Miracle Network® as well as contributions from additional companies and donors. Together, we represent 13 of Canada's children's hospitals where the greatest challenges are tackled; our hospitals

see the most critical cases. Your contribution helps your local children's hospital ensure that all sick and injured children have access to the very best care from coast to coast.

### **About The Sobeys Foundation**

The Sobeys Foundation was founded in 1982 by Frank H. Sobeys and his three sons; Bill, David and Donald. The Foundation's giving is rooted in the Sobeys family's continued commitment to improving the lives of individuals through investments in health, education and community. Although we work with organizations across Canada, the Sobeys Foundation primarily supports organizations whose activities make a difference in Atlantic Canada.

### **About Sobeys Inc.**

Proudly Canadian, with headquarters in Stellarton, Nova Scotia, Sobeys has been serving the food shopping needs of Canadians since 1907. Sobeys Inc., a wholly-owned subsidiary of Empire Company Limited (TSX: EMP.A), owns, affiliates or franchises more than 1,500 stores in all 10 provinces under retail banners that include Sobeys, Safeway, IGA, Foodland, FreshCo, Thrifty Foods, Farm Boy and Lawtons Drugs as well as more than 350 retail fuel locations. Sobeys, its franchisees and affiliates employ approximately 127,000 people. More information on Sobeys Inc. can be found at [www.sobeyscorporate.com](http://www.sobeyscorporate.com).

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