
FEDERAL BUDGET INVESTMENTS IN MENTAL HEALTH ARE LESS THAN MEETS THE EYE

March 31, 2023 (Ottawa) – In releasing the federal government’s 2023 budget, the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) continues to express its deep disappointment with the government’s inability to deliver on its long-promised Canada Mental Health Transfer, which was valued at \$4.5 billion over the next 5 years.

“Having protected funding for mental health is critical to ensuring that an increasing number of the people of Canada receive improved and expanded access to publicly funded mental health services”, said Dr. Karen Cohen, CEO of the CPA.

While \$2.5 billion has been set aside over each the next ten years to be negotiated between the federal-provincial-territorial governments, we do not know how much will be allocated to mental health or what impact it will have on-the-ground in terms of improving timely access to care. Furthermore, there is significant concern that there is little accountability in the federal-provincial-territorial agreement: “*asking* the provinces and territories is weak language as opposed to ensuring they meet specific criteria”, said Dr. Cohen.

This is a serious concern where the public still does not know what value-for-money the people of Canada have received for the \$5 billion dollars that was set aside for mental health and substance use health in 2017. It’s long overdue that we get more serious about health system accountability.

The CPA is also very concerned, particularly as we emerge from the COVID-19 global pandemic, that no investments have been made across the granting councils. For Canada to be competitive in recruiting and retaining top caliber researchers, we must create new knowledge, drive innovation and support a robust and sustainable science culture. “Psychosocial and behavioural science is the foundation of good public policy whose aim is to support wellness for people and the communities in which they live and work”, said Dr. Kerri Ritchie, President of the CPA.

The CPA remains concerned that the federal student loan forgiveness program was not expanded beyond physicians and nurses. Given unmet mental health needs in Canada, we must invest in our mental health human resources, inclusive of psychologists and other regulated mental health providers.

“There is no health without our mental health, and now, more than ever, we need governments at all levels to continue to invest in our most important assets...all people living in Canada,” said Dr. Ritchie, CPA President. “The CPA stands ready to work with all governments and others to find innovative and sustainable solutions that support the health and well being of everyone – our future depends on it.”

About the CPA

The Canadian Psychological Association is the national voice for the science, practice and education of psychology in the service of the health and welfare of Canadians. The CPA is Canada's largest association for psychology and represents psychologists in public and private practice, university educators and researchers, as well as students. Psychologists are the country's largest group of regulated and specialized mental health providers, making our profession a key resource for the mental health treatment Canadians need.

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