

Written Submission for the Pre-Budget
Consultations in Advance of the 2019 Budget

By the Canadian Psychological Association

Recommendation 1: Fixing unequal access to the psychological services offered by the Federal government

The federal government should adopt a consistent approach to coverage of psychological services for populations under its jurisdiction. Coverage across government programs should allow for the same number of sessions, the same processes to access and qualify for care, and the same rates paid to psychologists who deliver the care. This includes:

- a) Ensuring that the extended health benefits offered by the government allow users to access the 19-24 sessions of psychotherapy typically required for a successful treatment outcome.
- b) Paying psychologists, the recommended rate set by the provincial and territorial association of psychology in the jurisdiction in which the service is delivered.
- c) Removing the requirement that its employees obtain a physician's referral for any psychological services to be reimbursed under the extended health insurance plans.

Recommendation 2: Improving access to psychological services for all Canadians

The federal government should ensure the money transferred to the provinces and territories through the new Health Accord agreements is spent on mental health interventions that are evidenced-based and that the effectiveness of treatment delivered is monitored. The money targeted for mental health could be used by the provinces and territories to:

- a) Adapt the United Kingdom's Improved Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) program here in Canada.
- b) Expand the role of primary health care in meeting mental health needs.

Recommendation 3: Investing in students, early career researchers, and research infrastructure

The Federal government should move forward in a timely manner to implement the remaining Fundamental Science Reports' recommendations¹. These include:

- a) Increasing financial supports for graduate students and post-doctoral fellowship by \$140 million over four years.
- b) Investing an additional \$314 million per year to the Research Support Fund.
- c) Targeting an additional \$35 million annually to CFI for major research facilities (MRFs) matching ratio funding, and an additional \$5 million for research tools and instruments replacement costs.

About us

The Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) is the national association for the science, practice, and education of psychology in Canada. With over 7,000 members and affiliates, the CPA is Canada's largest association of psychologists. For more information about the CPA please visit www.cpa.ca.

Economic competitiveness

To promote Canada's economic competitiveness, the CPA recommends that the federal government continue to make investments in mental health services and research.

The productivity of individuals, economies and societies depends on the health and well-being of its human resource. With proper prevention, early identification and treatment, employers could expect to recover \$6 to \$7 billion of lost productivity costs annually. Yet, only about one-third of those in need report that they seek and receive care. The cost of mental illness to the economy and the workplace are significant.

- One in five Canadians will experience a mental health problem in a given year, costing the Canadian economy \$50 billion annually.
- Lost productivity resulting from mental illness and addiction is estimated at \$20 billion annually.

Investments made into psychological science are also paramount to our nation's success, having relevance to societal well-being, health, technology, innovation, productivity and the economy. How well people manage chronic disease, how employers optimize workplace satisfaction and productivity, how we understand the developmental issues and problems of childhood and aging, and how we effectively treat mental disorders like depression and anxiety are informed and advanced by psychological science. Students and early career researchers represent the next generation of researchers who will contribute to Canada's science culture, productivity and competitiveness by making ground-breaking discoveries and tackling the many economic, social, and cultural challenges facing Canadians.

Unequal access to psychological serviced offered by the Federal government

Several federal programs currently provide access to psychological services for designated groups. Some Canadians qualify for psychological services offered by the Canadian Armed Forces, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Veterans Affairs Canada, the Non-Insured Health Benefits (First Nations and Inuit) and Citizenship, Immigration and Refugees Canada (Syrian Refugees). The federal government is also a large national employer that provides access to psychological services to its employees through the Federal Public Service Plan. Unfortunately, these programs vary greatly in terms of how much coverage is provided, the rates of coverage offered and the steps that the client must take to access and establish eligibility for the services.

For example, the extended health care insurance plans for federal public employees falls short of meeting the amount of service needed. Anxiety and depression are the most common of mental disorders to affect Canadians and effective treatment typically requires 19-24 sessions with a

psychologist. To provide adequate coverage the Public Service Health Care Plan amount needs to be increased from \$2000 to \$3500-\$4000 annually.

Another example is the NIHB program that serves First Nations and Inuit people. The chart below shows how much the Federal Government pays psychologists for their work. The rates for the NIHB program are significantly lower than those set by the Provincial and Territorial associations of psychology. The rates are also significantly lower than those provided by other federal programs including the Canadian Armed Forces, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Veterans Affairs Canada, and Citizenship, Immigration and Refugees Canada (Syrian refugees). This means that a psychologist will be paid less for seeing a First nations or Inuit client over than an RCMP officer, military personnel or veteran. For clients to be able to obtain access to the best possible psychological services, compensation under NIHB must be consistent with compensation under these other federally funded programs.

Because Medavie Blue Cross, an insurer that covers service delivery for other mental health programs, has a policy that it will not charge the federal government more than it charges any other client, the low rates for the NIHB program affect what is paid for other programs. The NIHB system is also very complicated to navigate for both the client and the psychologist. For example, a client must first demonstrate that there are no other funded programs or services available to them. As you can imagine it can be challenging for someone in crisis to demonstrate that no alternate care is available. This requirement does not exist under other federal programs and must be eliminated.

Jurisdiction	Rate Recommended by Provincial Associations of Psychology (2017)	Canadian Armed Forces	Royal Canadian Mounted Police	Veteran s Affairs	Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada	Non-Insured Health Benefits (First Nations and Inuit)
NWT	\$200	Private rate*	\$180	\$200	\$130	
Yukon	\$200	Private rate	\$184	\$200	\$130	
BC	\$200	Private rate	\$184	\$190	\$160	\$95
Alberta	\$190	Private rate	\$190	\$195	\$170	\$130
Saskatchewan	\$160	Private rate	\$160	\$160	\$110	\$100
Manitoba	\$180	Private rate	\$180	\$170	\$150	\$110
Ontario	\$225	Private rate	\$220	\$225	\$205	\$140
Quebec	\$150	Private rate	\$150	\$140	\$125	\$105
NFLD/Lab	\$150	Private rate	\$150	\$150	\$150	\$150
NB	\$170	Private rate	\$200	\$200	\$130	\$150
NS	\$170	Private rate	\$150	\$162.50	\$140	\$150
PEI	\$180	Private rate	\$150	\$160	\$150	\$150

* When price is not listed on the benefits grid, the program is willing to pay the clinician's usual rate

Jurisdiction	Recommended Rates (2017)	Non-Insured Health Benefits	Percentage Difference
NWT	\$200		
Yukon	\$200		
BC	\$200	\$95	47.5%
Alberta	\$190	\$130	68.4%
Saskatchewan	\$160	\$100	62.5%
Manitoba	\$180	\$110	61.1%
Ontario	\$225	\$140	62.2%
Quebec	\$150	\$105	70.0%
NFLD/Labrador	\$150	\$150	100.0%
NB	\$170	\$150	88.2%
NS	\$170	\$150	88.2%
PEI	\$180	\$150	83.3%

We also recommend removal of the requirement that employees obtain a doctor’s note for psychological services to be reimbursed under the Public Service Health Care Plan that is offered through Treasury Board and through Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. As a regulated profession, psychologists’ scope of practice does not require medical referral or oversight. This requirement limits access, delays treatment, and poses further costs on the publicly funded health care system.

Access to services for all Canadians

Access to effective intervention for mental health problems and disorders should be available to all Canadians and not depend on income level or access to privately secured insurance. Currently, those who cannot afford to pay for treatment end up on long wait lists, depend on medications, or do not get help at all. If we want a health care system that will deliver cost- and clinically-effective care, then we must re-vision policies, programs, and funding structures through which health care is provided.

The CPA stated publicly that the 2016 Health Accord was a watershed moment for mental health in Canada. The Accord promised to target funds to redress the very significant gaps in mental health services available to the Canadian public. The Federal, Provincial and Territorial governments must be accountable to how these funds will be spent. Funds must be spend on enhancing care that works for the kinds of mental health problems Canadians face. We urge the federal government to ensure that the funds are spent on mental health interventions that are effective and in ways that have meaningful impact on the lives of individuals, families, workplaces and communities. As is the case when it comes to physical illness, there are a range of mental disorders, not all of which can be assessed and treated the same way. There is no one stop shop solution for the prevention and treatment of mental disorders. The CPA urges all levels of government to invest in evidence-based mental health solutions that respond to the kinds of problems their populations face.

Canada has fallen behind other countries such as the United Kingdom, Australia, the Netherlands, and Finland who have launched mental health initiatives that include covering the services of psychologists through public health systems. These initiatives are proving both cost and clinically effective.

Investing in students and early career researcher and research infrastructure

Canada's competitiveness can be enhanced achieved by implementing the unfulfilled recommendations in the report from Canada's Fundamental Science Review – *“Investing in Canada's Future: Strengthening the Foundations of Canadian Research”* – which was released on April 10, 2017.

Through its recommendations, the report offers a comprehensive plan to both change and improve Canada's research ecosystem and, in so doing, restore the position of Canadians as research leaders on the international stage. Among its many recommendations, this plan includes investing in fundamental research, students and early career scholars, the institutions housing the researchers, and the facilities/labs where the research is conducted. Through its historic investment in fundamental research in the 2018 federal budget, the Government has fulfilled the first component of the plan.

Facing significant burdens of high tuition and rising debt, additional funding is key for Canada's graduate students as they seek to complete their studies and make the transition into the labour market. Canada's continued high youth unemployment rates necessitate a more responsive labour market policy. Students represent the next generation of researchers who, with the proper education and inspiration, will make ground-breaking discoveries and tackle the many economic, social, and cultural challenges facing Canadians; as such there is continued need for harmonizing, upgrading, and bringing strategic focus to the graduate student and post-doctoral fellow support systems.

Continued increases in institutional research support and research infrastructure are also critical to research success. Funding is needed to enhance the environment for science and scholarship by improved coverage of the institutional costs of research, while targeted spending is required for infrastructure-related start up costs, ongoing costs to support major science facilities, and replacement costs for research tools and instruments that are outdated.

Finally, it is increasingly recognized that it is through collaboration and inter-disciplinarity that knowledge is advanced. Psychology by its nature and impact is inter-disciplinary. As a social, health, and natural science, psychology's relevance to societal well-being, human functioning, health, technology and innovation is everywhere – the effects of this on Canada's competitiveness and productivity are far-reaching.