



**Submission to the House of Commons  
Standing Committee on Finance  
2022 Pre-Budget Consultation Process  
from the  
Canadian Psychological Association (CPA)**

## **1. Background**

The Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) is the national association for the practice, science and education of psychology in Canada. By advancing research, knowledge and the application of psychology in the service of society through advocacy, support and collaboration, the CPA envisions a society where understanding of diverse human needs, behaviours, and aspirations drive policies, programs and legislation for individuals, organizations and communities.

## **2. Recommendations**

### Recommendation 1

*That the federal government table and pass the Mental Health and Substance Use Health Care For All Parity Act.*

### Recommendation 2

*That the federal government provide the provinces and territories with targeted funds to increase access to psychological therapies.*

### Recommendation 3

*That the Canadian Institute of Health Information (CIHI) have adequate resources to work collaboratively with the provinces and territories, and other stakeholders, to develop a comprehensive national public and private health expenditure series in mental health and substance use.*

### Recommendation 4

*That the federal government, in consultation with the psychology and mental health community, develop a Mental Health Research Action Plan to promote the mental health of the people of Canada and contribute to our future prosperity and economic competitiveness.*

### Recommendation 5

*To promote effective public policy and programming, the federal government increase its investments in research and development with:*

- *a 1% increase in Canada's gross domestic expenditure in R&D which at 1.56% is at its lowest since 2001 (OECD average is 2.4%); and*
- *increased funding to the base budgets of each of the CIHR, SSHRC, NSERC for fundamental basic and applied research, by at least 10% yearly, until commensurate with other G7 countries.*

## Recommendation 1

### **That the federal government table and pass the *Mental Health and Substance Use Health Care For All Parity Act*.**

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The CPA is concerned that long after we return to some semblance of a normal life, the mental health and substance use impacts of the pandemic may remain for some people in Canada, particularly those with pre-existing mental and physical health conditions and those who suffered vocational and economic hardship as result of the pandemic.

How will this anticipated increase in demand for access to mental health care services and supports be addressed in a world where there are already inequities in access to mental health care?

Both now and into the foreseeable future, we will need more and not less mental health and substance use health care. Now is the time for the federal government, working closely with the provinces and territories, CPA and others to fund evidence-based mental health and substance use health services and supports that respond to unmet needs for care, including addressing the psychosocial impacts of COVID-19.

To provide for a more transparent and mutually accountable relationship between the federal, and provincial and territorial governments, the Canadian Alliance of Mental Illness and Mental Health (CAMIMH) – of which the CPA is a founding member – recently called on the federal government to pass a new piece of legislation called the ***Mental Health and Substance Use Health Care For All Parity Act***.<sup>1</sup> Effectively, the act calls on the federal government to:

1. Enshrine in federal legislation the provision of, and timely access to, inclusive and accessible mental health and substance use programs, services and supports that are equally valued to those provided for physical health problems and conditions; and
2. Ensure that a full array of publicly-funded and evidence-based mental health and substance use health programs, services and supports are available to Canadians on an equitable basis, when and where they need it, and extend beyond traditional hospital and physician settings (as set out in the *Canada Health Act*).

Meeting the objectives of the Act will require sustained investment from the federal government, along with financial support from the provinces and territories to ensure Canadians have timely access to the mental health and substance use health care they need.

To respond to the existing unmet need for mental health and substance use health, as well as the need that has been exacerbated by COVID-19, CPA supports the recent recommendation by The Royal Society of Canada that the federal government, in conjunction with the provinces and territories, increase funding for mental health and substance use to at least **12%** of their health budgets. This figure is less than what other G-7 countries invest in mental health (i.e., France [15%], United Kingdom [13%]) as a percentage of their health budgets. The most recent publicly available figures suggest that Canada's current public mental health investments are about 5% of its total health budget.<sup>2</sup> Clearly there is room to do more.

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<sup>1</sup> *From Out of the Shadows and Into The Light...Achieving Parity in Access to Care Among Mental Health, Substance Use and Physical Health*. Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health, June 2021.

<sup>2</sup> Institute for Health Economics. *IHE Mental Health In Your Pocket – A Handbook of Mental Health Statistics*, page 86., 2019.

## Recommendation 2

***That the federal government provide the provinces and territories with targeted funds to increase access to psychological therapies.***

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This recommendation could build on, or be separate from, passing a ***Mental Health and Substance Use Health Care For All Parity Act*** (Recommendation #1). It recognizes the impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic on the mental health of Canadians and the likely increase in the demand for mental health services. Any increased need for care is in the context of a public health system which does not fund the services of health providers, like psychologists, who deliver psychological care.

The establishment of a ***National Psychotherapy Fund*** could provide the federal government, in close consultation with the provinces and territories, with two options:

1. The first option would see a national program, with dedicated funding and objectives, designed to increase access to psychological therapies. It could be similar to the “Improving Access to Psychological Therapies” (IAPT), which is an evidence-based and systematically-evaluated program was introduced in the United Kingdom in 2008, and would provide public coverage for psychological treatments where currently little or none exists (or for specific populations).

Psychologists, working in partnership with governments and other mental health providers, would play a leadership role in the design and evaluation, as well as oversight of programme delivery.

2. The second option would provide equal per capita funding to the provinces and territories on an annual basis to expand coverage for the assessment, diagnosis and/or provision of publicly-funded psychotherapies. This option would give the provinces and territories the flexibility they need to effectively integrate timely access to psychotherapies into their respective health systems.

### Recommendation 3

***That the Canadian Institute of Health Information (CIHI) have adequate resources to work collaboratively with the provinces and territories, and other stakeholders, to develop a comprehensive national public and private health expenditure series in mental health and substance use.***

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At the program, policy and systems level, access to health system performance indicators and health expenditure information are an absolute requirement. At the end of the day, you can't manage what you don't measure!

As governments consider how to effectively integrate mental health and substance use health programs and services into their respective health systems, we need to ensure that the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) has the focus and capacity to capture the breadth of mental health expenditures across both the public and private sectors.

Currently, CIHI has a limited amount of mental health and substance use health spending by governments (mostly at the hospital and physician level), and very little spending information from those whose services delivered in communities are not funded by our public health systems (e.g., psychologists, social workers, psychotherapists) and are funded through employer-based supplementary health benefit plans or out-of-pocket payments.

To ensure that governments have access to data-driven analysis/tools to improve overall mental health and substance use health system performance, we strongly support additional investments in CIHI to develop a robust national mental health and substance use health expenditure data series that covers both the public and private sectors.

#### Recommendation 4

***That the federal government, in consultation with the psychology and mental health community, develop a Mental Health Research Action Plan to promote the mental health of the people of Canada and contribute to our future prosperity and economic competitiveness.***

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COVID-19 was a dominating event in 2020 and 2021, bringing with it a significant impact on the mental health of the people of Canada, and one for which psychological science must keep pace.

While a pandemic underscores the importance of biological research in developing treatments and vaccines, it also calls on behavioural research to understand and help people cope with the psychosocial toll that the pandemic, and coping with the pandemic, takes on individuals, families, workers, and economies over the short-, medium- and longer-term.

Psychological research can play a critical role in helping governments, policymakers, health service providers, educators and economies develop and implement policies and programs that will not only promote a sustained recovery from COVID-19 but will also help Canadians reach their individual and collective potential and contribute to Canada's future prosperity and economic competitiveness. These include:

- How to bring about community behaviour change necessary to respond to a pandemic.
- Addressing the mental health impacts on workers, workplaces, students and schools.
- Identifying and providing mental health needs and supports for children, youth, families and seniors.
- Treating mental health issues such as depression and anxiety, suicide, interpersonal violence, eating disorders, substance use.
- Understanding and mitigating the psychosocial impacts of public health measures such as physical isolation, reduced contact with others, loss of organized recreational and sports activities.
- Addressing the impacts on inter-personal relations and social supports.
- Understanding and addressing the psychosocial risk factors and the differential impacts on people from marginalized groups.
- Promoting resilience and well-being of individuals and communities.
- Promoting re-integration into a post-pandemic society.

#### Recommendation 5

***To promote effective public policy and programming, the federal government increase its investments in research and development with:***

- ***a 1% increase in Canada's gross domestic expenditure in R&D which at 1.56% is at its lowest since 2001 (OECD average is 2.4%); and***
  - ***increased funding to the base budgets of each of CIHR, SSHRC, NSERC for fundamental basic and applied research, by at least 10% yearly, until commensurate with other G7 countries.***
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COVID-19 has negatively impacted Canada's research ecosystem – temporarily/permanently closing research labs; halting/ending research studies, careers, post-doctoral fellowships, international studies; reduced donations to research arms of not-for-profits; and closed academic institutions – just to name a few.

While government is to be recognized for its rapid-response research funds and all its financial measures to assist Canadians in mitigating the economic impacts of COVID, it is more critical than ever that government increase its investment in research and development. As per Dr. Mona Nemer, Canada's Chief Science Advisor, "It's clear that the reason we're able to fight the virus ... is because of other research that was totally unrelated that we had done in the past. If we want to be prepared for future emergencies, we need to have a strong basis of research in all disciplines...what the pandemic has shown us is that we have a lot of knowledge gaps that persist and that we need to continue to invest in fundamental research."

The CPA is of the view that there is a unique opportunity for the federal government to play a national leadership role in better understanding the psychological impacts of the pandemic, and the steps that can be taken to promote our quality of life and underpin our future prosperity and economic competitiveness.

The federal government can achieve this by investing in Canada's research ecosystem and a research action plan specific to psychology and pandemics.

Doing so would achieve the following outcomes: (1) deepen our understanding of the psychological impacts of, and how we respond to, a pandemic; (2) better inform Canada's policy-making from a health, social and economic perspective as we emerge from the pandemic; and (3) position Canada as a world-class leader in pandemic-based psychological and mental health research.