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## **An Imperative for Change: Access to Psychological Services for Canada**

Ottawa, May 2, 2013: To mark the one year anniversary of Canada's first mental health strategy next week, the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) is releasing an independent report by a group of health economists. The report 'An Imperative for Change' states that the delivery of mental health services can be characterized as a silent crisis and provides a business case, and proposes models, for improved access to psychological services.

"One of the great challenges when it comes to caring for the mental health of Canadians is the significant barriers to accessing mental health services. Despite the fact that one in five Canadians will experience a mental health problem in a given year, only one-third will receive the help they need. We have psychological treatments that work, and experts trained to deliver them. Yet the services of psychologists are not funded by provincial health insurance plans, which make them inaccessible to many with modest incomes or no insurance. Publically funded services, when available, are often in short supply and wait lists are long. The cost of mental illness in Canada is estimated at 51 billion dollars annually so we need to act now and be innovative in our approach," said Dr. Jennifer Frain, President of the CPA.

"Last year we were very pleased that Canada's national mental health strategy called for increased access to evidence-based psychotherapies by service providers qualified to deliver them. In response, we commissioned a report to look at how this can be achieved. The report proposes and costs out four models that could be implemented and adapted here," said Dr. Karen Cohen, Chief Executive Officer of the CPA.

"Canada has fallen behind other countries such as the United Kingdom, Australia, the Netherlands, and Finland who have launched mental health initiatives which include covering the services of psychologists through public health systems. These initiatives are proving both cost and clinically effective. Analysis of research in the United Kingdom found that substantial returns on investments could be achieved in the early detection and treatment of common mental health conditions such as depression. These models respond to the recommendations of the mental health strategy. By implementing them, we can move from conversation to action," added Dr. Cohen.

### Models for Canada

- Adapt the United Kingdom's publicly funded model for Improved Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) in the provinces and territories. Under this program psychologists and low intensity therapists deliver care for people with the most common mental health problems: depression and anxiety.

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- Integrate psychologists on primary care teams so that mental health problems are addressed at the right time, in the right place, by the right provider.
- Include psychologists on specialist care teams in secondary and tertiary care facilities for health and mental health conditions.
- Expand private insurance coverage and promote employer support for psychological services. Canadian employers could expect to recover \$6 to \$7 billion annually with attention to prevention, early identification and treatment of mental health problems among their workforces.

Read “An Imperative for Change: Access to Psychological Services for Canada”, <http://goo.gl/dlUjp>.