

Press Release - For Immediate Release

Psychologists Push for Greater Access to Services *Psychological Services Still not Sufficiently Covered by Insurance Plans*

(Ottawa, Ontario) May 6, 2014. The Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) is in Ottawa today to address with Parliamentarians and the media vital issues surrounding access to psychological services for Canadians who need them. With more than one in five Canadians experiencing a mental health problem or disorder every year, access to psychological services is not nearly sufficient to meet the needs of the population. CPA is in Ottawa to advocate for policies which will increase access to the services Canadians need.

“The sad reality is that for most people in need of the services of psychologist, access falls well short of what is needed,” said Dr. Kerry Mothersill, President-Elect of the CPA. “Psychological services are not covered under public health insurance plans despite the massive burden of mental disorders in the Canadian population, on the workplace and on the economy. Where they are covered by private employer-based plans, coverage caps and barriers usually mean that a clinically-meaningful level of care is out of reach of the vast majority of people who need it.”

The numbers are staggering. Mental illness costs the Canadian economy in excess of \$50 billion annually in absenteeism, presenteeism, and lost productivity. One in five Canadians will experience a mental health problem every year. Depression is the fastest-growing category of illnesses leading to disability claims to insurers; within the federal government, 40 per cent of these claims are related to mental health. Mental disorders cost employers as much as \$20 billion per year in lost wages and insurance payouts.

“These costs can be mitigated,” says Dr. Karen Cohen, CEO of the CPA. “As much as a third of employer losses related to mental illness could be recovered if employees were given timely access to effective psychological services and supports. The federal government – as an employer – has recently acknowledged this, doubling the coverage for public servant psychological services from \$1,000 to \$2,000 per year. That this was done in the context of overall cost savings in the administration of public service benefits proves to all Canadian employers that providing the psychological services demanded by today’s workforce will have a positive impact on the bottom line. We hope that this decision will be an inspiration to other of Canada’s employers.”

“The Canadian Psychological Association has been calling for increased access to psychological services for federal public servants for some time,” continued Dr. Cohen. “Barriers to accessing psychological care in Canada are not only limited by funding. Many private insurance plans make access to care dependent on physician’ referral – this creates longer and unnecessary wait times and burdens the public system. This referral requirement needs to be removed. Recent changes to tax policy also pose barriers to accessing care. A little-publicized change in HST rules from Budget 2013 has cast uncertainty on the taxability of some of the services performed by psychologists in Canada. After more than a year of seeking clarification on the new rules from CRA, psychologists are still in the dark as to which of their services are taxable and which are not. The CRA needs to issue a clarification on the Budget 2013 changes immediately to rectify this problem. Finally, governmental departments like correctional services and national defence, face challenges in recruiting and retaining psychologists. The CPA wants to work with government in addressing these challenges to help get psychological services to those who need it.”

The Canadian Psychological Association is the national association for the science, practice and education of psychology in Canada. With almost 7000 members and affiliates, CPA is Canada's largest professional association of psychologists.

For further information:

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