



CANADIAN COUNSELLING AND
PSYCHOTHERAPY ASSOCIATION
L'ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DE
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This brief is submitted by: The Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association
(CCPA)

Established in 1965, the Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association (CCPA) is a national bilingual association representing the collective voice of over 5,200 professional counsellors and psychotherapists. CCPA provides its members with educational programs, certification, professional development and direct contact with professional peers and specialty groups. CCPA members provide mental health services to diverse populations in a variety of work settings across Canada.

CCPA promotes the profession and its contribution to the mental health and well-being of all Canadians. As the leading association for counselling and psychotherapy in Canada, we strive to increase awareness about the role of the profession in all healthcare, educational and industry sectors. We know that critical investments in areas related to mental health and mental illness are vital for the overall health and wellness of all Canadians.

Mental illness affects one in five Canadians in their lifetime but despite the prevalence of mental health issues in the general population, people with mental health needs face multiple barriers to accessing services (Health Canada, 2002). These barriers largely result from negative societal attitudes about mental illness and contribute to lack of access to appropriate treatment and support services and difficulties obtaining employment and housing.

CCPA remains committed to collaborating with multiple organizations, associations, and alliances to promote mental health in Canada—ensuring access to the right care, provided by the right provider(s), to the right person, at the right time. We understand that professional counsellors and psychotherapists are a crucial component of the primary health care continuum.

CCPA has prepared the following written submission for review and consideration by the Standing Committee on Finance for inclusion in the 2015 federal budget.

Recommendation 1

CCPA recommends that the federal government launch a pilot project in Aboriginal and military populations to cover services more appropriately provided by mental health counsellors.

Shifting more of the burden of mental health care from less cost effective providers to fully-qualified counsellors will save millions of dollars per year while simultaneously expanding access to appropriate, timely service delivery.

By shifting more of the mental health care burden for Aboriginal Peoples and military members for which the federal government has direct fiduciary responsibility – from higher-cost providers to more cost effective counsellors, the government will save money now and in the future, ensuring fiscal sustainability.

Implementation of this recommendation has the potential to benefit Aboriginal and military communities in terms of gaining greater access to much-needed mental health services. It would also support and help families and vulnerable Canadians, by focusing on an increasing accessibility of mental health services, expanding the number of mental health service providers; thereby, reducing wait times, increasing early intervention to reduce the need for specialist care for preventable chronic conditions and lastly diminishing stigmatization through treatment at the primary health care level and non-medical settings.

Recommendation 2

CCPA recommends that mental health counselling services be excluded from the HST/GST requirement to ensure an equal-level playing field with other mental health care providers.

The established designations of: Canadian Certified Counsellors (CCC [pan-Canadian]), Registered Clinical Counsellors (RCC [British Columbia]), Registered Counselling Therapists (RCT [Nova Scotia]), conseiller/conseillère d'orientation (c.o. [Quebec]), holders of the Psychotherapy Permit in Quebec (Bill 21) and Registered Psychotherapists (RP [Ontario 2013]) are certified credentials held by professionals qualified to provide mental health counselling services.

CCPA wants to improve the Canadian regulatory regimes because GST/HST across the provinces and territories varies from 5% to 15%, an additional cost which provides unequal access to services by those Canadians who seek care by qualified providers such as mental health counsellors and psychotherapists. At present, professionals with an overlapping scope of practice with mental health counsellors and psychotherapists include physicians, registered nurses, registered psychiatric nurses, psychologists, occupational therapists and social workers—all of whom are eligible for HST/GST exclusion.

The money saved by shifting more of the mental health care burden from higher-cost to more cost-effective professionals in areas for which the federal government has

jurisdiction will more than offset any revenue reduction coming from expanding GST/HST exemptions to mental health counsellors. Additionally, this will assist in balancing the federal budget and ensuring economic growth.

Recommendation 3

CCPA recommends that the government fund incentive programs to attract youth to train for high demand jobs and encourage the recruitment and retention of counsellors across Canada.

Initiatives such as the student loan forgiveness program for physicians and nurses or tuition rebate programs can be extended to university graduates of counselling programs. The program could encourage Canadians to obtain the competencies necessary for the increased need for mental health-related jobs of tomorrow while encouraging foreign- and alternatively trained professionals to select Canada as a place of opportunity.

When there is an associated increase in qualified personnel in high demand jobs in rural, remote and northern communities in addition to an increased number of individuals interested in entering the profession, the result is increasing access and reducing waiting times for healthcare.

A lack of financial support is a significant obstacle in recruiting new mental health counsellors to rural, remote and northern areas. In order to increase productivity in Canada and ensure that all Canadians have access to quality health care, mental health counsellors should be included in existing and new incentive programs aimed at recruiting and retaining health care professionals in Canada's rural, remote and northern communities.

By relying more heavily on mental health counsellors for mental health care of groups for which the federal government has direct fiduciary responsibility, hiring of new employees is encouraged and healthcare businesses begin to flourish. The more that this recommendation is expanded and the more money that is saved, the more funding will be available to provide incentives for graduates to work in rural, remote and northern communities in Canada.

Implementation of this measure would increase the accessibility of mental health services. Through the expansion of qualified mental health service providers wait times could be reduced, thereby increasing the role of early intervention, and subsequently, reducing the need for specialist care for preventable chronic conditions.

Executive Summary

Given the importance of mental health to all Canadians and the presence of mental illness nation-wide, **CCPA recommends that dedicated and targeted investments be provided for better and more equitable access to mental health services.** All Canadians would benefit from better access to mental health services. Therefore, CCPA recommends the following be included in the 2015 federal budget:

1. CCPA recommends that the federal government launch a pilot project in Aboriginal and military populations to cover services more appropriately provided by mental health counsellors and psychotherapists.

2. CCPA recommends that mental health counselling services be excluded from the HST/GST requirement to ensure an equal-level playing field with other mental health care providers.

3. CCPA recommends that the loan forgiveness program be extended to university graduates of counselling programs, providing incentives for graduates to work in rural areas, remote and northern regions of Canada.

Overall, these recommendations focus on cost-offsets or cost-savings, both immediate and long-term while recognizing that professional counsellors and psychotherapists are part of the primary health care continuum and make vital contributions to the mental health and well-being of all Canadians.

References

Health Canada. (2002). A Report on Mental Illnesses in Canada. Ottawa: Health Canada.
<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/miic-mmacc/index-eng.php>