

RESPONSE PACKAGE

PSPC responses to Questions Taken on Notice Standing Committee on Government Operations & Estimates (OGGO) Canada's National Emergency Strategic Stockpile March 22, 2021

Question: (BQ member Julie Vignola) According to the 2021-2022 Departmental Plan of Public Services and Procurement Canada, PSPC, “the department is procuring other requirements such as mental health services and online COVID-19 tools, as well as accommodations and humanitarian support to individuals having to self-isolate.” What mental health services does the department provide and who can use them?

Response: Public Services and Procurement Canada procures goods and services on behalf of other government departments and agencies, and as such, other federal organizations determine what services or assistance would be beneficial to Canadians.

Procurements in support of Canada's COVID-19 Response

The following is an example of a procurement that Public Services and Procurement Canada has undertaken in support of Canada's COVID-19 response, for a requirement related to mental health.

- **Wellness Together Canada:**

On March 23, 2020, Public Services and Procurement Canada, on behalf of Health Canada, sent a Request for Proposal to 6 potential bidders for the procurement of an online portal and services required to provide psycho-social supports to Canadians during the global COVID-19 pandemic.

On April 8, 2020, the Wellness Together Canada (WTC) Contract was awarded to the Joint Venture between Stepped Care Solutions, Kids Help Phone, and Homewood Health.

On April 15, 2020, Health Canada launched the WTC portal to provide short-term mental health and substance use supports and services for Canadians during COVID-19. Key objectives were to help address the anticipated increase in mental health and substance use needs faced by Canadians, and the disruptions to normal service delivery resulting from the pandemic. To date, more than 1 million

individuals, in all provinces and territories, have accessed WTC in over 3 million web sessions (online interactions with the portal).

WTC provides free and confidential online mental health and substance use supports, accessible 24/7 to individuals across Canada in both official languages. Through the portal, individuals have immediate access to a range of supports that include assessments, self-guided programming, peer-support and counselling. WTC has essentially eliminated wait times for clients and, as a virtual tool, provides access to all Canadians regardless of their location. This has provided convenience and a means of reaching populations with barriers to care, such as those facing stigma, individuals living in rural and remote settings, those facing financial difficulties, and official language minority communities. As well, WTC helps to alleviate local pressures on service delivery by providing an alternative to in-person care. WTC is also accessible via text and phone, providing a source of support for individuals without access to the internet.

This is currently the only nationally available service of its kind, and is available and accessible to individuals across Canada.