

May 8, 2019

(distributed to each of the political party leaders)

As we get closer to the election I wanted to bring to your attention the pressing need to improve access to mental health services in the Province. As you know, the cost of mental illness in Canada is estimated at 51 billion annually. Psychologists are the largest group of regulated and specialized mental health care providers. Yet the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, in particular those in lower and middle income levels, face significant barriers when it comes to accessing psychological services.

Mental disorders that are addressed promptly and effectively will yield a cost offset of their treatments and decreases in short or long term disability. Psychological treatments are proven effective in treating a wide range of mental health disorders. Psychological treatments are less expensive than, and at least as effective as medication for a number of common mental health conditions like depression and anxiety without the negative side-effects associated with medication. People with depression who are treated with psychological therapy tend to relapse less frequently than those treated with medication. Every \$1 spent on Psychology services yields \$5 saved on medical costs.

However, Newfoundland and Labrador currently has several significant gaps in Psychology services. Despite some changes through stepped-care initiatives, adequate Psychological services provided through our health care system frequently have lengthy waiting lists. Many complex psychological disorders cannot be appropriately addressed via single session, walk-in services.

In order to receive more timely access to Psychology services, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians either pay out of pocket or rely on the private health insurance plans provided by employers. Coverage through private plans is almost always too little for a clinically meaningful amount of service. Access to evidence based treatments should not depend on your employment benefits or income level. Those who cannot afford to pay for treatment end up on long wait lists, have to depend on prescription medications, or simply do not get help at all.



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The Association of Psychology in Newfoundland and Labrador (APNL) has put forward a number of workable solutions that we would like your party to consider:

- Matching the Federal Government's announcement by increasing the amount covered for psychological services from \$500 to at least \$2000 for all provincial employees
- Ensure ongoing funding & support for the PsyD Program at Memorial University
- Improve access to psychological services for adolescents and adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- Improve access to health psychology services particularly Diabetes, Oncology and Bariatric Surgery
- Meeting National ratio Standards for Educational Psychologists in Newfoundland & Labrador's Schools

Please feel free to contact us if we can be of any assistance.

Best wishes,

Dr. Janine Hubbard  
APNL Past President/Communications Director