



CANADIAN  
PSYCHOLOGICAL  
ASSOCIATION  
SOCIÉTÉ  
CANADIENNE  
DE PSYCHOLOGIE

July 19, 2024

The Honourable Anita Anand, M.P., Q.C.  
President, Treasury Board of Canada  
90 Elgin Street, 8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Ottawa ON K1A 0R5

Dear Minister Anand:

I write to you with the understanding that there are a significant number of psychologists who are employed by the federal government across a range of departments who provide, develop, and evaluate quality mental health care services to several defined populations, in addition to being engaged in research and other services. Mental illness affects more than 6.7 million people in Canada, with one in two having—or having had—a mental illness by the time they reach 40 years of age. As we continue to emerge from a post-COVID world, we know that a growing number of people in Canada have a higher prevalence of mental health issues and would benefit from timely access to psychological services.

Given the specific populations that the federal government has responsibility for – such as our armed forces, veterans, those incarcerated, immigrants and refugees, Indigenous Peoples as well as public servants – many of these individuals will require extra attention given the demands they are facing and the mental health issues with which they are living.

To ensure they receive the timely and evidence-based care they deserve it is critical that the federal government have an adequate supply of psychologists. Our understanding is that there has been a steady decline in the number of federally-employed psychologists, and wait times to access psychological services for many of these populations is significant and growing. Our concern is that left untreated, mental health issues and outcomes will likely worsen and have a negative impact on short-term and long-term disability rates and costs.

The Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) is the largest national association for the science, practice, and education of psychology, representing over 7,000 members and affiliates. The CPA is prepared to work with the federal government to support initiatives that increase the number of psychologists employed by the federal government. In our view, a key contributor to attracting and retaining highly qualified mental health professionals is ensuring that they have a healthy and vibrant work environment in which to provide evidence-based care and that they are reasonably compensated for the work they do.

An analysis undertaken by the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada (PIPSC) estimates that psychologists within the federal public service require the second highest salary adjustment of the professions they represent, this includes a **38%** increase in salary to reflect market conditions, plus additional general economic increases for all healthcare workers to reflect the cost-of-living.

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This increase in salary will not only ensure that federally-employed psychologists are more fairly compensated for the knowledge, skill and expertise they provide, but are more reflective of the salaries they could receive from other public sector employers (such as hospitals, regional health authorities and universities) for similar work. In short, a more competitive salary structure can play an integral role in not only retaining current talent, but attracting new psychologists to this sector.

This increase in salary would also recognize the substantial and unique skill set psychologists have in treating clients. Aside from physicians/psychiatrists, they are the only professionals that are legally allowed to diagnose mental health and learning disorders in most (if not all) jurisdictions in Canada and have training commensurate with that scope. This training and expertise in assessment and diagnosis also comes with expertise in treatment planning and supervision of treatment delivery.

Although there are several mental health professionals who help people live with a mental health condition (e.g., psychiatrists, family physicians, psychotherapists, counsellors, social workers), psychologists are also uniquely trained as *experts* in the development, administration, scoring, and interpretation of tests of emotional, personality and intellectual functioning which form the foundation of accurate mental health diagnosis and appropriate treatment selection.

The primary differences between psychologists and other mental providers lies in their *scope of practice* and expertise. As noted above, psychologists are trained not only in service delivery (e.g., psychotherapy, family therapy) but also in assessment, differential diagnosis, treatment planning and evaluation, consultation, supervision, and research. Table 1 provides a summary of scope of practice, by select profession.

**Table 1**  
**Summary of Scope of Practice, by Select Profession**

	Physicians	Psychologists	Counsellors & Psychotherapists	Social Workers	Nurses
Formulate/communicate a diagnosis	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Administer/interpret psychological tests	No	Yes	No	No	No
Prescribing authority	Yes	No	No	No	No
Program Evaluation	No	Yes	No	No	No
Develop treatment plans	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Regulated profession	Yes	Yes	Yes/No	Yes	Yes

The CPA strongly believes that the most important asset that any organization can have is its employees. As a key national employer, it is critical that the federal government have a competitive compensation package that recognizes the skill and expertise of psychologists that will attract and retain psychologists for significant periods of time. Hiring full-time psychologists can also be more cost-effective than contracting out such work at significantly higher rates.

In closing, we respect and are supportive of the collective bargaining process and look forward to the outcome of the ongoing negotiations between the Treasury Board of Canada and the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada. If you would like to discuss this issue further, we can be reached at [executiveoffice@cpa.ca](mailto:executiveoffice@cpa.ca).

Sincerely yours,



Anita Gupta, Ph.D., R.Psych, C.Psych.  
President (2024-2025)



Lisa Votta-Bleeker, Ph.D.  
Chief Executive Officer

Copies to:

The Honourable Mark Holland, Minister of Health

The Honourable Ya'ara Saks, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions

The Honourable Chrystia Freeland, Deputy Prime Minister, and Minister of Finance

The Honourable Bill Blair, Minister of National Defence

The Honourable Ginette Pettipas Taylor, Minister of Veterans & Associate Minister of Defence