



# Improving Mental Health Care across Canada

In a typical year, one in five Canadians will experience a challenge to their mental health or a substance use problem. And we know that over the last 17 months, nearly half of Canadians say their mental health worsened. This is especially true for front-line workers, youth, seniors, Indigenous peoples, people with disabilities, and racialized and Black Canadians, who have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. The Liberal government had their backs – providing more support for those who need it most to get through the pandemic. And we can't stop there.

Mental health is health. We have made significant progress to deliver better access to mental health care for Canadians, including:

- \$5 billion to the provinces and territories to increase the availability of mental health care and home care;
- \$500 million in support during the pandemic for Canadians experiencing mental health challenges, homelessness or substance use;
- \$597.6 million for a distinctions-based mental health and wellness strategy for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Nation partners, including for the Indian Residential Schools Health Supports Program and Crisis Line and Hope for Wellness Line;
- \$107 million for mental health, culture, and emotional services in response to finding unmarked graves at sites of former Residential schools and the ongoing work of to finally bring their children home;
- \$100 million for mental health supports for health care workers, front-line workers, youth, seniors, Indigenous peoples, and racialized and Black Canadians, who have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19;

- \$140 million for supporting veterans' mental health to cover costs related to post-traumatic stress disorder, depressive and anxiety disorders;
- \$50 million for support to those at risk of COVID-19-related trauma or post-traumatic stress disorder; and
- Launching the Wellness Together portal, which more than 1.2 million Canadians accessed in its first year alone.

A re-elected Liberal government will deliver better mental health care for more Canadians by:

- Establishing a new federal transfer - the Canada Mental Health Transfer - to provinces and territories to expand the delivery of high-quality, accessible and free mental health services;
- Committing to permanent, ongoing funding for mental health services under the Canada Mental Health Transfer, with an initial investment of \$4.5 billion over 5 years;

- Introducing a new fund for student well-being to improve wait times and increase access to mental health care at colleges and universities, including by hiring up to 1,200 new mental health care counsellors, including those who can support the needs of Black, Indigenous, and racialized students;
- Fully funding a national, three-digit mental health crisis and suicide prevention hotline;
- Committing an additional \$1.4 billion for a co-developed mental health and wellness strategy with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Nation partners;
- Undertaking a comprehensive review of access to the Disability Tax Credit, Canada Pension Plan disability benefits and other federal benefits and programs to ensure they are available to people experiencing mental health challenges;
- Working with community partners on the design and establishment of a fund to support the mental health of Black Canadians in the public service; and
- Including mental health as a specific element of occupational health and safety under the Canada Labour Code, and requiring federally-regulated employers to take preventative steps to address workplace stress and injury.

### **Stable Funding for Mental Health Care**

We will establish a new federal transfer to provinces and territories—the Canada Mental Health Transfer—to expand the delivery of high-quality, accessible and free mental health services. Building on the principles of universality and accessibility in the Canada Health Act, this transfer will help establish standards in each participating province and territory, so more Canadians can access the mental health care they need. This will help each province and territory solve critical backlogs in service, such as mental health services for children, youth, or new mothers, and provide help to those who need it according to the unique needs in each region.

As part of this new Canada Mental Health transfer, we will commit to permanent, ongoing funding for mental health services, with an initial investment of \$4.5 billion over 5 years. Including the existing bilateral agreement on mental health services signed in 2017, this would bring federal support for mental health services to \$2.5 billion per year by 2025-26. This is in addition to further investments we will make to support First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities with better access to trauma and mental health services.

### **Improving Student Mental Health**

Students at college and university report higher rates of mental health challenges than the rest of the Canadian population. Students who need mental health care can experience long wait times and limited access to care on campus.

We will invest \$500 million over four years to improve student mental health on campus and dedicate 10% annually to support Indigenous-governed and operated post-secondary institutions. This investment will support the hiring of up to 1,200 new mental health care counsellors at post-secondary institutions across Canada to ensure that universities and colleges have sufficient resources to provide better and more timely mental health care for students in need.

### **Establishing a National, Three-Digit Hotline**

We will move forward to launch a national, three-digit mental health support hotline to help Canadians and their families connect with mental health and suicide prevention services in their area. The Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission has a public consultation currently underway on the scope of this service and a Liberal government will continue to support this project and ensure its funding requirements are fully met.

### **Better Mental Health Care for Indigenous Peoples**

Indigenous people continue to face challenges accessing culturally grounded, Indigenous-led and trauma-informed mental health care. The legacy of colonization, residential schools and intergenerational trauma continues to impact the lives of many Indigenous peoples.

We will invest a total of \$2 billion over 5 years for a co-developed, distinctions-based mental health and wellness strategy with First Nations, Inuit and Métis Nation partners. A strategy could also respond to the prevalent opioid crisis, include culturally-appropriate services for addictions and trauma, suicide and life promotion, and treatment centres, based on the priorities of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Nation partners.

### **Increasing Access to Benefits**

We will undertake a review of the Disability Tax Credit, Canada Pension Plan disability benefit, and other federal benefits associated with psychosocial disability to ensure that these supports are comprehensive and more accessible to Canadians who need them. The review will be guided by an advisory group of Canadians and other experts in benefit delivery.

## **Support for Black Canadians in the Public Service**

Black Canadians face unique challenges when it comes to mental health in the workplace. We'll work with community partners on the design and establishment of this fund, which directly responds to calls from Black employees in the public service and will ensure that Black public servants are supported.

## **Updating the Canada Labour Code and a Right to Disconnect**

Mental health is a component of occupational health and safety. That is why we launched a review of the Canada Labour Code aimed at including mental health as a key component of the Code, and implementing the 'right to disconnect' so that workers in the federally-regulated sector can feel confident and supported in their workplaces.

On the basis of this review, a re-elected Liberal government will amend the Canada Labour Code to include mental health as an element of occupational health and safety and require federally-regulated employers to take preventative steps to address workplace stress and injury.

The 'right to disconnect' promotes work-life balance by enabling employees to be unresponsive to work-related communications sent outside of established work hours, require federally-regulated employers to implement a comprehensive workplace mental health strategy, and require employers to provide mental health training to managers in federally-regulated workplaces. These amendments will accompany our commitment to introduce 10 days of paid sick leave for all federally-regulated workers.