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Press Release – For Immediate Distribution

February is Psychology Month – Current state of Psychology in NL

February is Psychology Month in Canada. An initiative sponsored by the Canadian Psychological Association that began in 2005, the goal of Psychology Month is to generate grassroots activities that will raise Canadians' awareness of the role psychology plays in their lives and in their communities. Psychology Month encourages all members of the psychology profession to connect with their communities and show them the value and benefits of their work.

There are currently 211 Registered Psychologists in NL, and approximately 18,000 Psychologists in Canada.

In recent years there has been a significant exodus of Psychologists working in the Public Health Sector (Education, Health, Post-Secondary) with many areas currently experiencing vacancies of 30-50%.

At the same time, likely related to lengthier waiting times or lack of available services in the public system, Psychologists working in Private Practice have seen an unprecedented demand on their services, resulting in lengthy waiting lists, or lack of availability, even for those with the means (or insurance) to pay. As an example there have been no private psychologists able to take on new child clients in the St. John's region since the fall – just at a time where childhood anxiety, depression, eating disorders and school avoidance are increasing levels. .

“We are experiencing a Psychology crisis”, says APNL President Dr. Janine Hubbard. “We are on the verge of the public being unable to access a Psychologist in our public system (schools, health care) unless they are able to pay, and even then, demand on private services is at an all time high”.

During the first week of February, The Association of Psychology Newfoundland and Labrador (APNL) surveyed its members to better understand the current situation, as well as to assess stress levels as they relate to both COVID and uncertainty/changes in their current Psychology roles.

Key Findings:

- Psychologists enjoy and feel very passionate about the work they do with their clients.
- Psychologists are reporting mild (38%) to moderate/high (44%) levels of professional burnout, linked moderately to COVID. 3.5% reported severe levels of professional burnout.
- Top reasons for remaining employed as a Psychologist in the public sector include: benefits, pension, job security, types of clients, and working with a team
- 52% of current public sector Psychologists indicated “yes” they have recently considered leaving their job, with 13% responding “maybe”. Only 35% indicated they were not considering leaving their current position – **65% have recently considered leaving public sector Psychologist positions**
- In order to stay, public sector Psychologists indicated the need for:
(listed in order of most common responses)
 1. Increased respect
 2. Increased autonomy
 3. Better understanding of the role, education, and/or skills of Psychologists
 4. Increased salary
 5. Increased opportunities to use Psychology skills
 6. Increased financial support for education/training opportunities
- Uncertainty regarding changing role expectations, job descriptions, and restructuring is strongly influencing potential decisions about leaving
- Majority would leave the public sector and enter full time (31%) or part-time (16%) private practice
- Psychologists who recently left the public sector listed the following concerns
(listed in order of most common response)
 1. Lack of understanding about the role, education and/or skills of Psychologists
 2. Lack of respect
 3. Workload level
 4. Lack of understanding of the scope of practice of all mental health clinicians
 5. Lack of Autonomy
 6. Limited opportunities for promotion
 7. Salary

- Psychologists in full time private practice indicated the following reasons for working in private practice (listen in order of most common response)

- Autonomy
- Flexibility
- Ability to practice to scope
- Types of clients
- Ability to meet client needs
- Respect
- Salary

- Most commonly noted suggestions for improving recruitment and retention of Psychologists in the province

1. Increased respect
2. Increased autonomy
3. Increased pay
4. Decreased workload
5. Better understanding of the unique skills and training of Psychologists
6. Need to have Psychologists included when decisions are being made/new programs being considered
7. Need for better understanding of the importance of supervision, and the time requirements involved

Media interviews with a Psychologist on this (or other topics), can be arranged by contacting Dr. Janine Hubbard at 682-0235 or janine@janinehubbard.com