

ELECTION 2024: Mental Health Needs of Nova Scotians

November 12, 2024

Dear Candidate:

The Association of Psychologists of Nova Scotia (APNS) is the professional association representing psychologists across the province. Our diverse membership spans every health zone and members actively engage with and support mental health in their communities. APNS promotes psychological well-being by advocating for the needs and issues of people and society.

Psychologists are leaders within the mental health field and provide crucial mental health services that include psychological assessments, diagnosis, treatment and research. Psychology is a regulated profession under the Nova Scotia Psychologists Act. To be a psychologist one must meet rigorous professional requirements and adhere to prescribed standards, guidelines and ethical principles. Given their training and expertise, psychologists are in a unique position to: (1) advise on the clinical implications of the roll out of programs to support the goals above, (2) support evaluation of those programs, and (3) oversee the implementation of evidence-based practice among a wider range of disciplines or health professions.

We urge you to demonstrate your commitment to mental health in Nova Scotia by prioritizing and endorsing the three key issues outlined below.

1. **Improving public access to mental health services** through timely access to services, high quality of care, innovative implementation, collaborative care teams, educating the public on mental health and addictions care services and supporting organizations that provide mental health care.
2. **Public System Recruitment and Retention.** Public health system and school psychologists are leaving public institutions to work in the private sector. This is mostly due to workplace culture, shortage of resources that affect the standard of care, lack of professional autonomy and wages.
3. **Increased Education and Training.** There is a shortage of psychologists across Nova Scotia. Students who leave the province for training often do not return, whereas students who train here often stay. Additionally, the mental health needs of Nova Scotians are increasingly complex, requiring newly trained psychologists to possess very specialized skills. To meet the complex health needs of Nova Scotians, university graduate programs and residency training sites across the province need to be expanded. Funding is necessary to support increased opportunities for high quality, graduate-level training in psychology within Nova Scotia, which will enable graduates to better support diverse and underserved clients in high needs regions.

APNS Psychologists are available to discuss these issues with you and to help you become a champion of improved mental health for all Nova Scotians.

The Association of Psychologists of Nova Scotia