

**Graham Flack**  
Secretary of the Treasury Board

**Christine Donoghue**  
Chief Human Resources Officer

**Taki Sarantakis**  
President, Canada School of Public Service

With copy to:

**Kelly Acton**, Assistant Secretary, Strategic Communications & Ministerial Affairs, TBS; and,  
**Mireille Laroche**, Assistant Deputy Minister, People & Culture, OCHRO, TBS

**Subject:** Bell Let's Talk & the Government of Canada

Dear Deputies,

We are reaching out to you today to discuss Mental Health and Wellness in the Canadian Public Service. Specifically, how we can move forward in a direction that builds off the incredible work done to date in raising awareness, destigmatizing, and promoting conversation. A direction that (hopefully) excludes the promotion of Bell Let's Talk, for reasons outlined later in this letter.

The pandemic has been difficult on everyone; the mental health of Canadians has taken a significant toll due to a broad range of systemic factors, and Canadians need our support now more than ever.

The Government of Canada has truly stepped up its efforts to support both Public Servants, and all Canadians in destigmatizing mental health, raising awareness, and providing critical and necessary tools to support peers through various life events. While your organizations have done some incredible work, there are three, specific actions that we want to highlight as having a very positive impact:

- **The Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat** (specifically, the Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer) launched the Centre of Expertise on Mental Health in the Workplace, an invaluable resource that works across government, including with bargaining agents, to develop learning resources, tools, specific, tailored resources for various situations, such as the incredibly annual Federal Workplace Mental Health Checklist.
- **The Centre of Expertise on Mental Health in the Workplace** has developed a pivotal strategy, entitled the Federal Public Service Workplace Mental Health Strategy, which is an important step in our efforts towards a healthy, respectful, and supportive work environment, and focuses on changing culture, building capacity, and measurement and reporting. This strategy is foundational, and an important piece of work.
- **The Canada School of Public Service** took the tremendous step of launching the Mental Health Learning Series, supporting the Government of Canada in working towards a culture change for mental health, and attempting to lift the stigma by offering learning in support of the Federal Public Service Workplace mental Health Strategy. The associated courses, job aids, and other tools have been a monumental step in the right direction.

This work has demonstrated the capability of the public service to step up in a leadership role in the Mental Health Space, and has immensely helped efforts to raise awareness, destigmatize, and continue the conversation.

Another effort that the Government of Canada supports is Bell's annual "Let's Talk" event, a day put together by Bell to help break the silence and stigma associated with mental health. Let's Talk has been around for 12 years, and is an annual marketing campaign where Bell donates 5 cents per engagement on various platforms. We believe that the Government should end this relationship with Bell, and instead continue the tremendous leadership we have demonstrated to date.

The public servants that have signed this letter feel that Bell's activities described above are incompatible with public service values. We think it is time that we as public servants lead the charge in destigmatizing and funding mental health; in fact, it should not take any corporate sponsorship for the Government of Canada to make strong messages in support of positive mental health and the de-stigmatization of Canadians living with mental illness. We invite you to consider, in line with the actions above, the degree to which your support for Bell is in or out of line with the work that the Government has done to date.

Bell Lets Talk Day is not the way out of this mental health crisis that we face. Bell is pushing the narrative that they assist in destigmatizing and support mental health, but the reality is that the corporation refuses to walk the talk. For example, Bell [fired a radio host after she presented mental health leave orders](#) from her doctor; or [how they pushed sales staff so hard that one even puked blood](#). To add to this, [Bell charges prisons for phone calls made from provincial jails](#), regularly lays off staff right before the holidays (Example [one](#), [two](#), [three](#), [four](#), [five](#)). All of this, while the company [pays off even higher bonuses](#) to its executives, and [taking a labour subsidy while boosting its dividends](#). The hypocrisy of this company needs to be pointed out, because even if these stories were false (they're not), this organization's attempt to get free marketing through a tax write-off that they make every year anyways, is still not a force for good.

The specific support from the Government of Canada differs greatly than any private organization supporting this campaign. It provides support for a campaign that [benefits companies that profit in data mining, as people who engage with it are targeted by advertisers](#). It supports the campaign of an organization [who denies allegations of how they push their sales people to the brink of mental collapse](#). It supports an organization who, frankly, refuses to walk the talk, and it provides free marketing to a for-profit corporation, who is known to [gouge rural communities](#), [teach their salespeople to mislead & defraud](#).

Terminating the relationship with Bell may open more doors than it closes. Terminating this relationship would widely be seen as a positive step – distancing ourselves from the organization that has done little to fix mental health challenges within their own organization, providing positive press. It also allows us continue to lead in this space, instead being able to focus our efforts on World Mental Health Day (October 10), or the Canadian Mental Health Associations' Mental Health Week, from May 2 to May 8.

Those two are not the only options. We, as a group, would be more than happy to work with you, or your organizations, to discuss alternative event models, other approaches, collaborate on events, or seek out other opportunities that can benefit the mental health of public servants across Canada.

We ask for your consideration, both in terminating the Memorandum of Understanding, and in looking to other opportunities to continue the [incredible](#) leadership that you and your organizations have demonstrated to date.

With regards,

Public Servant Advocates for Mental Health (see Annex – Signatures)