

Date: March 21, 2002

To: Mr. Jeffrey Lozon, CEO, St. Michael's Hospital;
The Board, St. Michael's Hospital;
The Hon. Tony Clement, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care; &
Members of the Ontario Provincial Parliament

From: Members of the Canadian Professional Psychology community

Re: St. Michael's Hospital, Psychology Department and training program

It has come to our attention that St. Michael's Hospital is considering closure of its Psychology Department and training program. We strongly urge an immediate reversal of this decision.

Health reform throughout the country is attempting to address financial concerns with greater emphasis on evidence-based practice and prevention-based interventions. An abundant scientific literature has been accumulating over three decades demonstrating the value of psychological intervention in mainstream health care. This evidence is summarized in numerous briefs to recent health commissions (e.g., Fyke; Romanow), easily accessed on the internet (www.cpa.ca, "Health Commissions"). In brief, psychological interventions reduce the burden of mental health problems that have a staggering toll on our society, both in human suffering and economic terms. Psychological interventions also reduce the burden on mainstream health, because of the impact of psychological factors in health-related behaviour and illness recovery. Thus, the very immediate, and comparatively minimal short-term financial claw-back will compare negligibly to the costs on many fronts to the government and public consumer down the road (e.g., days of disability; inappropriate "transfer" of patients to other, more costly areas of the health care, where staff will often be ill-equipped to deal with mental health issues). Psychology human resources are already scarce in the public sector and the group is under-funded relative to other health professions.

If St. Michael's Hospital and the Ontario government support an evidence-based, fiscally responsible, prevention-oriented approach, then you cannot approve the closure of another psychology department and training program in your province. In fact, the opposite is true—you should be expanding the role of psychological interventions in public health, and bolstering the function of psychologist training.

Yours sincerely,

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