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March 27, 2002

The Hon. Tony Clement
Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
80 Grosvenor St.
Hepburn Block - 10thFloor
Toronto, ON
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Re: Psychological Services at St. Michaels Hospital

Dear Mr. Minister

It is with growing shock and disbelief that I continue to learn details of the closing of the Psychology Department at St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto.

This closure appears to related to the mistaken idea that Psychological Services are only for the mentally ill. While this was perhaps the case in the 1960's, it is no longer true.

Psychological services are proven effective in many areas of health. Research shows psychological services reduce suffering in irritable bowel syndrome, chronic pain, diabetes, chronic obstructive lung disease, as well as distress in patients with angina and other cardiac ailments. The use of Psychological services saves time and save money for the health system. This is because psychological factors and human behaviour are at the core of health and health care across the continuum of care.

This is not just conjecture, it is fact. Research shows psychological services reduce the use of emergency rooms, hospitalization, pharmaceuticals and physician services. For example, patients whose panic disorder is managed stop attending emergency rooms for assessment of cardiac concerns.

The argument is made that since outpatient Psychological services are not required under the Canada Health Act that they need not be funded. Access to psychological services needs to be available for all Canadians and not just the upper income groups.

I must strongly protest the action of St. Michael's hospital in abandoning this necessary service.

Yours sincerely

Paul R. Davidson, Ph.D., C.Psych.

Copies:

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