

Douglas Reberg, Ph.D., C. Psych.
Stratford, ON

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Mr. Bert Johnson, MPP
556 Huron St.
Stratford, Ontario
Via e-mail <bjohnson@cyg.net>

Dear Mr. Johnson,

I have been informed of the possible closing of the psychology department at Toronto's St. Michael's Hospital. I am calling this matter to your attention, because it is important that you be informed of developments that could adversely affect the health of Ontario residents. St. Michael's Hospital provides specialized services to many patients from this area (in fact, my wife is one such patient), and decisions about what St. Michael's considers essential services could easily influence policies in other jurisdictions.

As a psychologist who has worked extensively in publicly-funded agencies, I would regard the closure of St. Michael's psychology department as a very serious error. Such a decision would have very negative impact on patients who now rely on those services. Most St. Michael's patients are simply unable to afford the fees of psychologists in private practice, so closure of the department would effectively terminate their treatment. Any savings created by this decision would simply not justify the hardships created. Moreover, any savings may be more illusory than real.

I know the Ontario Psychological Association and the College of Psychologists of Ontario have met very recently with representatives of the Ministry of Health and Long-term Care, calling attention to the importance of publicly-funded psychological services. Research demonstrates that psychological services reduce suffering, save time and money by reducing the use of emergency rooms, hospitalization, pharmaceuticals, and physician service. The evidence for psychology services in hospitals is compelling, particularly since the studies emphasize patients' needs and cost-effectiveness.

Please see that patients of St. Michael's and other hospitals are not deprived of treatment that should properly, and sensibly, be a feature of publicly-funded health care.

I have forwarded copies of this correspondence to Health Minister Clement, Jeffrey Lozon (CEO of St. Michael's Hospital), and to my colleagues in the Ontario Psychological Association, The College of Psychologists of Ontario and the Canadian Psychological Association. I am very concerned about this situation, and I would welcome an

opportunity to meet with you to discuss this matter in more detail. Many thanks for your assistance.

Sincerely yours,

Douglas Reberg, Ph.D., C. Psych.