



March 8, 2002

Mr. Jeffrey Lozon  
CEO, St. Michael's Hospital  
30 Bond Street  
Toronto, ON  
M5B 1W8

Dear Mr. Lozon:

It was with shock and deep disappointment that we learned of your institution's decision to eliminate the department of psychology at St. Michael's Hospital. This is a very serious decision that will significantly affect the health of your patients and the hospital's ability to deliver cost-effective services.

Hospital spokesperson, Nicole Ireland, indicated in the article in the Toronto Star that the main reason for your decision is financial. The blame is placed on the Ontario government who in turn will place the blame on the federal government. However, the reality is that research has consistently shown over the past twenty-five years that psychological services significantly reduce costs. These studies are readily available and the Canadian Psychological Association will be publishing a cost-offset paper this month. We will be sure to send you a copy.

Rather than eliminating the psychology services at the hospital, if money was the underlying factor St. Michael's should have increased their psychology staff across the continuum of care. This would have provided a higher quality of service with increased cost-savings in system utilization (in-patient services, emergency services, physician services, pharmaceutical, etc.). Instead, the hospital has decided to become ever more biomedical in orientation thereby further reducing the hospital's ability to assist individuals in taking charge of their health and health behaviour. This decision makes patients even more dependent on highly expensive hospital, technological, pharmaceutical and medical interventions while further marginalizing psychology and the role of human behaviour.

The Ontario Government wants Ontarians to take more responsibility for their health. This means changing behaviour to assist people in staying healthy, preventing disease and injury, getting better faster, rehabilitating effectively, reducing relapses, and managing chronic disease and disability more effectively. Since psychology is the science of human behaviour, it is obvious the pivotal role psychology plays in health and health care.

The reduction of psychological services appears to be a Greater Toronto Area (GTA) problem. It cannot go without notice that similar actions were taken by a hospital in Scarborough, Sunnybrook, and the Toronto General. At least in the latter situation the counterproductive move taken by the administration was offset by individual programmes and departments re-engaging the dismissed psychologists as employees. Finally, the psychology internship at the Credit Valley Hospital was eliminated.

These decisions were taken in the absence of a comprehensive hospital-based or municipal and provincial government plan to provide psychological services in the GTA. No effective discussions were held with patients or providers, those most affected by the decisions, nor with those whose responsibility it is to represent these groups.

The result is a further erosion of psychology in the public health care system in the GTA with the Torontonians of low and middle income now having even less access than before. They cannot afford to pay for services in the private sector nor do many of them have adequate supplementary health insurance. More affluent Canadians have good access and the demand outstrips the supply across the country. The real tragedy is the lack of institutional and governmental support for programs that ensure access to those who cannot afford it.

I point you to some materials which I urge you and your staff to review. I have included copies of some with this letter. They are available on the CPA web site at the following URLs.

- C     *Putting Human Behaviour at the Heart of Health Care in Canada:  
Submission to the Commission on the Future of Health Care in Canada,*  
November 2001  
[www.cpa.ca/CPA\\_brief.pdf](http://www.cpa.ca/CPA_brief.pdf)
  
- C     *Strengthening Health Care in Canada*  
[www.cpa.ca/strengthening%2D1.html](http://www.cpa.ca/strengthening%2D1.html)

C     *Brief to the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and  
Technology, May 2001*  
www.cpa.ca/kirbybrief.pdf

I also urge you to review the Ontario Psychological Association submissions to the Commission on the Future of Health Care in Canada and the Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology which can be found on the OPA web site or at the CPA web site at [www.cpa.ca/RomanowOPA.PDF](http://www.cpa.ca/RomanowOPA.PDF) and [www.cpa.ca/KirbyOPA.PDF](http://www.cpa.ca/KirbyOPA.PDF).

Psychological associations across the country work with all levels of government and institutions to develop comprehensive, creative and cost-effective plans to deliver psychological services to Canadians. This partnership is built upon dialogue and trust. Unilateral decisions taken without adequate consultation and without an effective plan impede progress, compromise cooperation and endanger patient welfare.

The membership and Board of Directors of the Canadian Psychological Association urge you and your staff to reconsider this most unfortunate decision. We would be glad to assist you in these deliberations in any way we can. High-quality and cost-effective patient care is what is at stake.

Yours sincerely,

William T. Melnyk, Ph.D.  
President

cc:   Tony Clement, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, Province of Ontario  
      Dalton McGuinty, Leader of the Official Opposition, Province of Ontario  
      Howard Hampton, Leader of the NDP, Province of Ontario  
      Members of the Ontario Legislature  
      Ontario Psychological Association  
      College of Psychologists of Ontario  
      Council of Provincial Associations of Psychologists  
      Canadian Council of Professional Psychology Programs  
      Council of Canadian Departments of Psychology  
      Canadian Register of Health Service Providers in Psychology

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