

January 28, 2014

The Honourable Deborah Matthews, Ph.D.
Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and Deputy Premier
Hepburn Block, 10th floor
80 Grosvenor Street
Toronto, ON M7A 2C4

Dear Minister Matthews:

We are writing to applaud the recently announced collaborative initiative in Ontario aiming to redress the knowledge and practice gap at the interface of mental and physical health and health care. Collectively, the Ontario and Canadian Psychological Associations represent the province's premier licensed professional resource when it comes to mental and behavioural health. There are approximately 3,000 licensed practitioners of psychology in Ontario, which is a third more than the number of psychiatristsⁱ (approximately 1,850). Further, Ontario is home to 40% of the accredited doctoral programmes that train Canadian psychologists.

Health psychology is one of the specialty areas within professional psychology and involves the study and application of how the mind, body and behaviour interact in health and disease. Health psychologists work throughout Ontario's public health systems as members of teams in tertiary care helping patients manage chronic health conditions like diabetes, heart disease and chronic pain, as well more traumatic and progressive conditions like brain injury, dementia, and multiple sclerosis. Increasingly in Canada, psychologists are becoming members of primary health teams where their expertise is directed not only to the management of chronic health conditions but also mental health promotion and illness prevention. Finally, those psychologists who are academically affiliated throughout the country make important contributions to the clinical training, not only of psychologists but also of other health care professionals, like physicians.

One of the profession's core messages to our partners and stakeholders in health has been that Canada's health and well-being depends upon its behavioural and mental health. In a submission to the federal government in anticipation of the termination of the 2004 Health Care Accord, we talked about the need for governments to support their citizens living well in health and with illness. Attention to mental and behavioural health can help people stay healthy and equally help people best manage the health conditions they may inevitably get. ⁱⁱ ⁱⁱⁱ

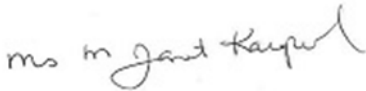
It is because of this interest and expertise that our associations are so pleased to learn of the Ontario's government's investment in an alliance whose focus is on the interface of mental and physical health. It is critical that services and supports when it comes to mental health receive parity with the attention and funding accorded to physical illness. It is critical for our collective health and well-being that the psychological dimensions of illness be seen as core rather than peripheral to disease management and recovery.

We have taken recent opportunities to communicate with you about a report that we commissioned in 2013 which proposes and costs out models to enhance access to psychological services for Canadians. We would like to draw your attention once again to its recommendations^{iv}. Since that time we have also commissioned another report documenting the effectiveness of psychological intervention for three sentinel health conditions, namely depression, anxiety and heart disease^v. The message in these reports is that psychological interventions are first line treatments for a range of conditions and disorders. There are real barriers to accessing psychological treatments because they are not covered by public health insurance plans and the coverage provided through private plans is most often too limited to allow for meaningful treatment. When asked, Canadians cite a lack of access to these treatments as a significant gap in needed care^{vi}. The return on investment in making psychological treatments available to those who need it is considerable at the level of the individual, family, workplace, and economy^{vii}. The business case for the Ontario Psychological Association's recently submitted proposal to you to conduct a demonstration project to better integrate public and private services at the community level is strong and will be an effective way to assist the partners to achieve the goals of the collaborative initiative.

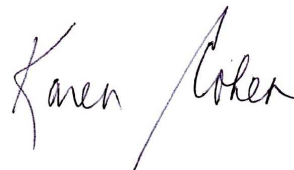
We applaud the government on this initiative to better address the continuum of health needs of its citizens. Ontario's psychologists, whose research and practice expertise includes the management of health and illness and the psychological concomitants of disease, are a critical resource for the alliance. We urge you to call upon our associations to help mobilize and organize psychologists' contributions to this important initiative.

We will follow up this letter with a meeting request to discuss how we can be of help.

Sincerely,



M. Janet Kasperski
Chief Executive Officer
Ontario Psychological Association



Karen Cohen, Ph.D., C. Psych.
Chief Executive Officer
Canadian Psychological Association

ⁱ http://www.cma.ca/multimedia/CMA/Content_Images/Policy_Advocacy/Policy_Research/25-Psychiatry.pdf

ⁱⁱ <http://www.cpa.ca/docs/file/Government%20Relations/modelsofcare.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.cpa.ca/docs/file/Position/CPAbriefSSCommitteeNov2011FINAL.pdf>

^{iv} http://www.cpa.ca/docs/File/Position/An_Imperative_for_Change.pdf

^v http://www.cpa.ca/docs/File/Practice/TheEfficacyAndEffectivenessOfPsychologicalTreatments_web.pdf

^{vi}

<http://www.cpa.ca/docs/File/Media/2013/Press%20Release%20New%20data%20confirms%20that%20the%20mental%20health%20needs%20of%20Canadians%20are%20not%20being%20met.pdf>

^{vii} http://www.cpa.ca/docs/File/Position/An_Imperative_for_Change.pdf