



January 28, 2014.

The Honourable Rona Ambrose
Minister of Health
Health Canada
70 Colombine Driveway, Tunney's Pasture
Ottawa ON K1A 0K9

Dear Minister Ambrose:

On behalf of the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA), I was pleased to hear your address to the Economic Club of Canada on January 30, 2014. Your messages about the need for innovation and accountability in health are ones health science and provider communities enthusiastically endorse.

We understood from your remarks at the Economic Club luncheon that you will be convening a Wise Person's Panel charged with visioning innovation in health care that will deliver cost and clinically effective care for those who need it. The Canadian Psychological Association would like to contribute to this work as a member of the Panel. When it comes to the management of health and illness, the science and practice of our discipline and profession have core relevance and we are eager to lend our expertise.

Canada needs a health care system that is nimble enough to respond to the health needs of citizens, deliver evidence based care and hold itself accountable to the clinical and costs effectiveness of the care delivered. To accomplish these goals, innovation is needed; innovation on the part of health care providers, the systems and organizations through which care is delivered, and indeed to the policy and funding structures upon which health care delivery depends.

In your address you mention the importance of helping Canadians to manage both their wellness and their illness. One of our 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.

Clinical, health and neuropsychologists work throughout Canada'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.

Health and disease management is largely about behaviour. The better supported people are when managing their health and disease, the better the outcome – better outcomes for individuals, families, the health care system and the economy. The behavioural management of health and illness, as well as the assessment and delivery of evidence-based mental and behavioural health care, is the core expertise of our profession. Psychologists are the country's largest group of regulated health providers specializing in mental and behavioural health – outnumbering psychiatrists almost 4:1.

In 2013, CPA commissioned a report which proposes and costs out models to enhance access to psychological services for Canadians. 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. The message in these reports is that psychological interventions are first line treatments for a range of conditions and disorders – both mental disorders (e.g. depression and anxiety) as well as the behavioural health dimensions of what are common chronic physical health conditions (e.g. heart disease, diabetes). 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. 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.

As you and your Ministry work towards innovation and accountability in health care, we urge you to do so with parity so that all determinants of health and wellness (i.e. psychological and social as well as biological) are addressed. We look forward to an opportunity to make a contribution to the Wise Persons' Panel and will follow up with your office.

With best wishes,



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

¹ <http://www.cpa.ca/docs/file/Government%20Relations/modelsofcare.pdf>

¹ <http://www.cpa.ca/docs/file/Position/CPAbriefSSCommitteeNov2011FINAL.pdf>

¹ http://www.cpa.ca/docs/File/Position/An_Imperative_for_Change.pdf

¹ http://www.cpa.ca/docs/File/Practice/TheEfficacyAndEffectivenessOfPsychologicalTreatments_web.pdf

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<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>

¹ http://www.cpa.ca/docs/File/Position/An_Imperative_for_Change.pdf