



Canadian Council of Professional Psychology Programs
Conseil canadien des programmes de psychologie professionnelle

8 February 2010

The Saskatoon Health Region Senior Executive

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Ms. Sandra Blevins

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Saskatoon, SK

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Dear Members of the Saskatoon Health Region Senior Executive,

Re: The Psychology Residency Program, Saskatoon Health Region

The Canadian Council for Professional Psychology Programs expresses its strongest and unequivocal support for the Psychology Residency Program, Saskatoon Health Region. This well-established program is 25 years old and was one of the first clinical psychology training programs to be accredited. Through the dedicated efforts of its staff, the program has developed to become one of the most well-regarded professional psychology internship programs in our country. Its excellence is evident in its joint accreditation status with the Canadian Psychological Association and the American Psychological Association

The Psychology Residency Program has made extremely valuable contributions to the province of Saskatchewan and to the field of professional psychology. The work performed by the interns is a cost-efficient way of providing services. The amount of stipend that they are accorded is minimal compared to the amount and quality of work that the patients, hospitals and clinics receive in return. Many places in Canada are experiencing a particularly difficult time in recruiting, retaining, and replacing health professionals. Areas that do not have a local training program often lose their graduates to other regions that do offer training resulting in a brain drain situation. It is worth noting that several interns who trained with the Psychology Residency Program are employed in the Saskatoon Health Region, and the Prince Albert and Regina - Qu'Appelle Health Regions. This is evidence that the program does help to address the difficulties associated with the recruitment and retention of psychologists. The services that psychologists provide are many. They include assessment, diagnosis, group and individual interventions, program development, consultation, evaluation and research, teaching, policy development, management-administration, and advocacy. The continued existence of the Psychology Residency Program is essential to ensure that the mental health needs of the people in Saskatchewan continue to be looked after.

The funding uncertainty that currently surrounds the program is highly unfortunate. It comes at a time when the emphasis in the field is on the creation of more professional psychology training programs to meet the demands of the professional psychology students and the mental health needs of the public. Additionally, interviews of the internship applicants had already been completed. These applicants chose the Psychology Residency Program knowing that they would receive superb training there. About half of them were not from the local region and had incurred considerable travel expenses out of pocket to attend the personal interviews in the hope that they would be selected for the position. Their reaction to the funding situation is understandably one of surprise, dismay, and frustration.

Putting the program on hold for financial reasons is inexplicable for four reasons. First, such an action results in cuts in mental health services to the public. Second, the savings associated with the two internship positions is minimal when viewed within the scope of the Saskatoon Health Region annual budget. Third, the considerable damage to the professional image and reputation of the program does not justify the savings. Fourth, it takes a great deal of time and dedicated effort to build a reputable program of excellence such as this one that is highly respected across Canada, but it only takes a single misstep to bring it all down. Needless to say, the university and professional training programs in Psychology in Saskatchewan and across Canada are following this situation with a great deal of concern.

We urge the Executive of the Saskatoon Health Region to carefully consider all aspects of the problem in their deliberation of funding for the Psychology Residency Program. This is a program that raises the profile of the Saskatoon Health Region, that benefits the well-being of the Saskatchewan people, and that the province of Saskatchewan can truly be proud of. It is most deserving of continued funding. Thank you.

Sincerely,

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cc: Dr. Fern Stockdale Winder