

November 18, 2005

Hon. Chris Bentley  
Minister of Training, Colleges, and Universities  
Ministry of Education  
Mowat Block, 900 Bay Street  
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1L2

Dear Hon. Mr. Bentley,

On behalf of the Canadian Council of Professional Psychology Programs (CCPPP), I am writing to share thoughts on recently announced funding enhancements for graduate professional training in your province, including that which will go towards psychology. For your information, the Canadian Council of Professional Psychology Programs (CCPPP) represents the various university-based psychology programs and psychology residency settings in Canada that train professional psychologists such as clinical psychologists, counselling psychologists, and clinical neuropsychologists, as well as other branches of professional psychology.

Our organization was pleased to learn that your government recognizes the impending shortage of professionals such as psychologists who would be required to fill anticipated vacancies at institutions of higher learning. It is also the case that professional psychologists will be needed to meet increasing needs for health services in our aging population. Research on psychological services has demonstrated the effectiveness of interventions for a wide variety of health problems.

The training of future psychologists entails both academic work at universities and practical work in applied settings prior to granting of a degree. I am concerned that current planning may have overlooked a required portion of psychologists' training. That is, like physicians, doctoral psychologists require a full-time, one-year predoctoral internship (i.e., residency) training prior to the granting of their graduate degrees. While money has been invested in the academic portion of the training experience, it is my understanding that funding has not yet been directed towards needed training seats in psychology internship programs.

It is very important to realize first that the residency training year is a relatively low cost investment in comparison to the large investment already made through post-secondary training infrastructure. At the present time, a stipend for internship training is approximately \$30,000.

The majority of psychology residency programs in Ontario are located in hospitals and university counseling centres, where staff psychologists offer direct supervision and training in the practices of professional psychology (e.g., assessment, intervention, consultation). A list of Ontario internship programs is available on our website <http://www.ccppp.ca/en/internship.html>. Thus, programs capitalize on utilizing existing staff as supervisors, minimizing additional infrastructure investment needs.

There is already a shortage in residency training placements for psychology in the province of Ontario. Plans to produce even more psychologists who will require residency training as part of their doctoral degree necessitates planning for this increase, while also allowing us to address the current imbalance in training positions. Professional training programs in Ontario currently produce almost 80 students for internship training each year, while offering less than 40 residency positions. The addition of more academically prepared psychologists will strain the province's internship training capacity even more.

In rationalizing the allotment of additional dollars for this training, I think it would be helpful to recognize what failing to address this need means. In all scenarios, a person pursues his or her graduate degree, consuming a significant amount of tax dollars in the process. Some trainees will obtain residencies in existing Ontario programs, and will likely stay on to work locally. If unable to obtain a residency position anywhere, all of the investment through the graduate training will be lost. More likely, though, but no less concerning for the Ontario government and citizens, is that the person may relocate to another province or to the United States to complete their training. In this scenario, many students who relocate for residency make professional connections in the new geographic region and accept employment there. As such, the large investment made through the years of graduate training is lost because the limited funding for residency was not allocated.

In reflecting on this problem, I believe that a simple place to begin this planning and preparation may be in allocating funding to programs that only recently closed as a result of funding shortages in hospitals/health regions. These programs include: Windsor Regional Hospital, Grand River Hospital, and Credit Valley Hospital. In the past, funding for these programs was provided through hospital budgets. However, this placed them at the mercy of ever-tightening, closely scrutinized health budgets. Therefore, I would submit that in future it would be more sensible to extend training money from the Ministry of Education directly to the training programs where training investment can then be fully realized. Secondly, another simple solution would involve expansion of existing programs, with new funding allocations for stipends. Finally, the CCPPP would also be pleased to collaborate on the development of new internships in other training locations outside of traditional health care and counseling settings.

In closing, I would like to re-iterate that the CCPPP is delighted to learn of the expansion of academic training positions for academic psychology in Ontario. We would like to offer our assistance in planning for all necessary components of the training, including needed resource allocation to psychology residency training programs across Ontario. I will look forward to your thoughts on this matter.

Yours sincerely,

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President, CCPPP

LJW/

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