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It is with deep concern that I am writing this letter on behalf of the Canadian Council of Professional Psychology Programmes in response to Grand River Hospital's decision to discontinue funding of its Psychology Predoctoral Internship Program.

The need for well-trained psychologists in Canada is clear. Psychologists fill increasingly complex roles including designing and delivering prevention and treatment programs across all areas of health care. This degree of expertise is achieved through an extensive training process which involves at least 8 years of post-graduate training after a four year undergraduate degree. One of the major requirements of this supervised practice, the one year fulltime internship, is an intense year of learning, with exposure to a full range of psychological problems, illnesses, diagnoses and treatments. The Accreditation Standards and Procedures for Internships in Professional Psychology of the Canadian Psychological Association state that an internship is: "the final but essential step in preparation for professional practice in psychology at the doctoral level. It is at this step that graduate students are afforded the opportunity to apply theoretical and technical knowledge, to develop and refine professional skills, and most importantly, to integrate the theoretical, practical, and scientific in their emergent roles as professional psychologists. It is this integrative process and requirement that sets the internship apart from earlier practicum experiences which focus more concretely on the acquisition of skills. Finally, the internship socializes students into their professional roles and facilitates the transition from one (student) to the other (independent professional)."

It is critical to consumers that all providers of psychological services meet the highest possible standards of practice. Psychology interns are in their final, formal year of clinical training; thus, they provide highly-skilled services. These services are cost-effective. Studies of psychology intern services have found that they are a 'good buy' when compared with staff and technician costs. These studies take into account the cost of stipends, time devoted to supervision and teaching by staff, administrative costs, and fringe benefits and conclude that intern programs are highly cost effective. Training programs not only enhance the provision of clinical services but also foster the economic objective of the organization.

Of course, interns provide numerous nonmonetary benefits as well. Interns bring with them new ideas and energy, including their knowledge of cutting edge treatment

techniques and the most up-to-date research literature. Interns can offer new approaches to specific clients and populations. Yearly turnover of interns provides staff with variety, change, and an ongoing challenge to stay up-to-date. Top quality staff members may be attracted to the reputation and prestige of an agency as a training site, especially those interested in teaching and supervision. Training sites, in turn, strive to continually improve their training in order to maintain accreditation with a national accrediting agency and attract top interns to their programs. The high quality training program subsequently contributes to the reputation of the facility.

Comments and observations made by interns can benefit the program and contribute to improved provision of services. Interns are often directly involved as members of administrative committees and provide fresh perspectives regarding client services and staff issues. Interns also work as research collaborators and program evaluators, contributing to ongoing staff development.

Staff recruitment is also enhanced by the internship program, since interns may apply for staff positions or return after internship when they are already familiar with the program. This is particularly important to areas where populations are underserved and recruitment proves to be a challenge.

The Executive of the Canadian Council of Professional Psychology Programmes urges you to re-consider your decision and to consider alternatives to discontinuing your internship program. We would be very pleased to work along with you to find a way to keep these important positions open and available to your community and to the training community as a whole.

Yours truly,

Valerie Holms, President
Canadian Council of Professional Psychology Programmes