

## “Narrowing the Access Gap for the Most Vulnerable”



During the 2016 Queen’s Park Reception co-hosted by the OPA and CAMH, we were highly successful in demonstrating the strength of psychology in Ontario and the many roles that psychologists play as researchers, educators and clinicians. The energy in the room was electrifying. One of our respected members mentioned that psychologists throughout the province have noted that something different was happening at the OPA. We knew that our hard work was paying off. There is a light at the end of the tunnel that is shining brightly and bodes well for the OPA’s advocacy efforts on behalf of the most vulnerable Ontarians.

Our third annual **Queen’s Park Reception** gave us an opportunity to reflect upon our advocacy efforts and to recognize what an impact we have had on public policy in Ontario. In an effort to fully recognize the contributions of psychologists as researchers, educators and clinicians, the OPA partnered with CAMH and invited psychologists from a number of mental health agencies and the universities to be in attendance. Ministers, MPPs, policy advisors and bureaucrats from numerous ministries prepared toasts as tribute to the work that psychologists and psychological associates are doing for the impoverished and vulnerable mentally ill Ontarians every day help us celebrate our many accomplishments. The feedback from our parliamentary guests about the work of the OPA on social media was outstanding (visit <http://twitter.com/onpsych>).

### The Toasts to Psychology

OPA President, **Dr. Jonathan Douglas**, opened the proceedings with warm words of welcome - and a strong reminder of the need for more equitable access to psychological interventions. **Dr. Catharine Zahn** (CEO of the CAMH and a world-renowned Neurologist) provided a heartfelt tribute to psychologists and acknowledged the fact that, until recently, psychologists were out of sight and out of mind. Dr. Zahn stated that she was learning first hand about the high level of competencies that psychologists bring to the care of patients at the CAMH and throughout the province. Following Dr. Zahn’s presentation, **Dr. Sean Kidd** (Chief of Psychology at CAMH) accepted the OPA/CAMH Mental Health Award of Excellence on behalf of **Ms. Susan Pigott**. Ms. Pigott is the Chair of the Provincial Mental Health and Addiction Leadership Advisory Council. Ms. Pigott, a nurse and a social worker by training, gave a phenomenal tribute to psychologists. Her acceptance speech can be viewed here (visit [Facebook.com/OnPsych](https://www.facebook.com/OnPsych)).

We want to acknowledge the presence of Parliamentary Assistant **MPP Indira Nadoo-Harris** who spoke on behalf of the Minister of Health, Dr. Eric Hoskins whose presence was needed in Attawapiskat, to address the mental health emergency in that community. Her toast was inspirational. MPP Nadoo-Harris and **MPP Eleanor McMahon**, our parliamentary host for the event, represent ridings in Halton.

With both **Jan Kasperski** and **Dr. Jane Storrie** from Burlington, MPP McMahon highlighted the OPA’s contributions to improving local mental health systems. Dr. Storrie was blushing by the time MPP McMahon completed her tribute to our Past-President for her contributions to mental healthcare in Burlington. Ms. Jan Kasperski’s leadership at the provincial level on behalf of the OPA was acknowledged.

**MPP Chris Ballard** (Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy) took great delight on the podium during a crossfire exchange with our MPPs from Halton on the joys of living in Aurora versus Burlington. His tribute to **Dr. Sylvain Roy**, President-Elect, was well deserved and quite touching.

**Dr. Helena Jaczek** (Minister, Ministry of Community and Social Services) highlighted the changes that are taking place in the Medical Review process for the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). Dr. Roy's work with the disabled and chronically homeless men at Seaton House complemented her presentation. Dr. Roy represents the OPA on the committee reviewing the ODSP program.

The presentation part of the evening ended with a tribute to the Co-Chairs of the Three Party Select Committee on Mental Health. Former MPP and Provincial Patient Advocate, Christine Elliott had received her award at a previous OPA event. The Reception provided the OPA to recognize **Minister Kevin Flynn** (Labour) and **MPP France Gelin** for their leadership in providing the framework for the government's Mental Health Strategy - and their subsequent work in transforming the Committee's recommendations into actions that are impacting on First Responders, Aboriginal peoples, northern and francophone communities and vulnerable Ontarians throughout the province.

The OPA recognizes the need to build and nurture relationships with organizations that share our values and passion to address gaps in mental health services. Bridging the clinical and academic worlds of psychology in Ontario is a prime example of our efforts to build collaborative relationships. The OPA's relationships with CAMH and its psychologists have grown tremendously as a result of this event. It was great to see the work at CAMH of **Drs. Niki Fitzgerald** and **Lisa Couperthwaite** recognized. They had the honour of representing both the OPA's Board and the CAMH at the CAMH station. **Drs. Paulo Pires** and **Kelly Horner**, Co-Chairs of the OPA's Continuing Education and Research Committee, have the mandate to develop and enhance relationships with a number of partners as we further develop our "Research into Practice" model to support the early adoption of evidence-based best practice clinical practices. (See CAMH's tribute to Psychologists: [t.co/OWegbkCjDI](http://t.co/OWegbkCjDI))

### Visiting the Stations

Our parliamentary guests were able to visit all of the OPA stations, the CAMH station and the stations showcasing the roles that psychologists play in research, education, hospital inpatient and outpatient services and long-term care.

### Homelessness, Refugees, Developmental Disabilities and First Nations Mental Health

**Dr. Sylvain Roy**, shared insights into his work at the Seaton House, one of the largest emergency homeless shelters in the country. His innovative approach to delivering primary care neuropsychology services at the Inner City Family Health Team is changing the way the profession can triage patients to the right level of care by diagnosing psychopathology early and evaluating cognitive, academic and adaptive skills to address mental health functioning in the homeless population. The efforts of our members who have volunteered to assist the Syrian Refugees was recognized by an invitation for Dr. Roy and Jan to join the **Special Advisory Table on Refugees**, chaired by Dr. Hoskins and Minister Chan (Ministry of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade). **Dr. Terri Hewitt** Vice President at Surrey Place did a phenomenal job promoting the role of psychologists in the developmental disability sector. **Dr. Suzanne Stewart**, Canadian Research Chair in Aboriginal Homelessness and Life Transitions and Associate Professor at the University of Toronto participated in the discussions regarding the Attawapiskat Suicide Crisis.

### Psychologists in the Courtroom

**Dr. Barbara Fidler** was on hand to talk about the work of psychologists in the court system. Information was shared about the collaborative efforts of the OPA, Legal Aid Ontario and the Office of the Superior Court of Ontario to develop positions for psychologists in the courtroom. Psychologists are uniquely positioned to assist lawyers and judges to address the need of defendants with mental disorders, litigants in family court and to mitigate further psychological trauma for the victims of sexual assaults, domestic violence and other violent crimes.

### Psychologists in Schools and Paediatric Centres

The pressures on our school psychologists were highlighted. The government officials were sensitive to the efforts made by school psychologists to educate teachers, educational assistants and public health nurses on the signs and symptoms of distress in children and adolescents and their efforts to assess and meet the needs of Syrian children and adolescents. The march on Queen's Park the day previously by parents of children with autism was top of mind with our guests. Our School Psychologists, **Drs. Maria Kokai and Carolyn Lennox, Drs. Brenda Spiegler and Sharon Guger** from the Department of Psychology at Sick Children's Hospital, and **Dr. Paulo Pires**, from McMaster's Children's Hospital were well prepared to address the questions that might arise regarding child/adolescent mental health.

### Psychologists Addressing Occupational Stress Injuries

**Past-President, Dr. Jane Storrie** was on hand to talk about the role of psychologists in addressing occupational stress amongst First Responders and Correctional Officers. In light of the passage of Bill 163 (the PTSD bill), this arena of practice had afforded many opportunities for the OPA to work with the Ministry of Labour and directly with several First Responder services. The OPA's Certification Program in Prevention and Management of Psychological Mental Health and Safety was a major success and a second program is being offered this month.

### Increased Scope for Psychologists

**Dr. Diana Velikonja** described the advocacy efforts of the OPA in acquiring prescribing privileges for psychologists and their ability to issue Mental Health Forms.

### Psychologist in Private Practice

**Drs. Faith and Ron Kaplan** joined **Dr. Douglas** at the Private Practice station. The work of the Kaplans with the Ministry of Finance and FSCO is exemplary. While the joys of private practice and third party payment systems, including the interactions of the OPA and WSIB, was the topic of discussion, Dr. Douglas was able to present the OPA's views on Medically Assistance In Dying - a topical subject given the release of Bill C-14 by the Federal Government. Dr. Douglas was also able to speak to the continued efforts of the OPA to clarify the use of the title "psychotherapist" at this station.

### Psychologists in Primary Care

**Dr. Jason Ramsey** was on site to talk about the daily life of a psychologist in a Family Health Team. We received advice that we need to submit a request to ensure that every Family Health Team, Community Health Centre and Nurse Practitioner Led Clinic is funded to have psychologists available to serve the ongoing psychological needs of patients in the primary care sector.

### Psychologists in Mental Health Hospitals and Geriatric Centres

The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) and St. Joseph's Mental Health Centre in Hamilton ably represented the mental health hospital sector. Our parliamentary visitors were pleased to have an

opportunity to meet **Drs. Sean Kidd, Kwame McKenzie, Donna Ferguson and Christian Hendershot** from CAMH; **Drs. Randi McCabe, Bruno Losier, and Margaret McKinnon** from St. Joe's and **Dr. Angie Troyer** from Baycrest Health Centre.

### University Departments of Psychology

On hand to provide an overview of the strength of Ontario's University Departments of Psychology in fostering excellence in research and innovation and the strength of our education programs in the education of psychologists and other mental health providers were the following faculty members:

- **York University**  
Drs. Joel Goldberg, Adrienne Perry and Gary Turner  
Poster Presentation: Kristina Cordeiro and Jala Rizeq
- **University of Toronto**  
Drs. Susanne Ferber, Katherine Duncan and Morgan Barensse
- **University of Ottawa**  
Drs. Tim Aubry and Marie-France Lafontaine
- **Ryerson University**  
Drs. Martin Antony and Karen Milligan
- **Guelph University**  
Dr. Francesco Leri

Day-by-day, it is hard to judge whether or not you are making a difference. We have seen the dramatic increase in the number of job postings and of requests from the public to help them find a psychologist, so we knew that psychologists were in demand. The incredible amount of positive feedback on April 13, 2016 reinforced the fact that the OPA is on the right track. We now know that the light at the end of the tunnel is near and from a positive source of light - and not a train. The OPA board and your dedicated staff members, Lara Pocock and Cathy Hamilton, remain committed to doing whatever we can to help you, our members - Ontario's researchers, educators and clinicians - serve Ontarians to the best of their ability. The Queen's Park reception reassured us that we are succeeding. To know more about some of this work, take a closer look at our Issue Briefs (<http://psych.on.ca/Resources/OPA-Resources-Publications>).



Dr. Jonathan Douglas, President



Jan Kasperski, Chief Executive Officer