

Raising the Profile of Psychology in Ontario



Internally strong organizations are viewed positively by the outside world. We are working extremely hard to create an organization that is internally strong, financially stable and respected by our members. Simultaneously, we are shining a bright light on psychology in Ontario. This is Mental Health Week and we want you to know about our plans. At the end of the week, we are going to launch a financial campaign to provide the funds to transform our plans into actions.

Posts to the Listserv from time to time suggest that the OPA needs to launch a media campaign to raise the profile of psychologists and psychological associates in the province. Other organizations take out full-sized ads in newspapers. They invade the airways and create TV ads and advertise at bus stops and on the subway. Members ask why we don't do the same and they have offered to donate to such a campaign. But these campaigns are very costly and the results are quite limited. There are smarter and less costly ways to attract the attention of the public, the media and the government. The strategies that we propose to implement, with your financial support, will increase our ability to serve our members and Ontarians alike – a win-win for all of us.

While a splashy campaign may seem like a great way to shine a light on psychology, we need to invest our time and effort, and especially our volunteer member and staff resources, in pursuing methods that are proven to be effective. Other NewsBriefs have described the various ways in which we have been moving the OPA forward. We have kept up a grueling schedule and have met with multiple government and other stakeholders to inform them of the many roles that psychologists and psychological associates play in the system. They tell us that lobbyists are beating on their doors. What they need and want is to hear from organizations that know how to solve the problems they're facing in improving care for Ontarians. It is even better if you know how to implement your recommended solutions. To this end, we have identified the problems in the system and established multiple partnerships to develop new and innovative ways to creatively address them. When we approach government, we present solid implementation plans that are well supported in the various practice environments.

We are well on our way to creating a vibrant, energetic and well-respected organization – and we have done so on a shoestring budget. We continue to face a major legal challenge in response to the discovery of potentially improper financial transactions. We are making every effort possible to recover as much of our funds as possible. Our gratitude goes out to our dedicated board and staff members who are in danger of burning out due the heavy workload they bear in trying to keep up with the two of us! At this time, we need your financial support to continue to move the yardsticks forward. Some of your donated funds would be used to hire external consultants and other dollars would allow us to increase our staff complement to meet the start-up demands of our various projects. Here is an outline of our plans:

Shining a Light on Psychology: Raising the Profile of Psychology in Ontario

1. Media Campaign

Anchored in the development and release of a “survey” specifically designed to provide the public with an opportunity to describe their experiences with the mental health system, their understanding of the important teaching, research and clinical roles of our members, their experiences in receiving care from psychologists and psychological associates, and their support for increased access to psychological services. The OPA requires the assistance of a public relations firm to assist us to develop the survey questions and a research company to undertake the telephone survey and analyze the results. The public relations firm would then develop a press release, prepare our spokespersons and facilitate a press conference at Queen’s Park to present the survey results. We would then conduct interviews with newspapers and present the results on various radio and television programs. Given the army of OPA tweeters that participated in Bell Let’s Talk and our many followers, a social media campaign would take the messages viral. **This is the smarter and less costly way to raise the profile of our members amongst the public, government and other healthcare professionals.**

2. Member Directory

The public, government, physicians, lawyers, insurance companies, school boards, the press, etc., need to know how to locate a psychologist or psychological associate in the right geographic area with the right specialty area and level of expertise. Our current Referral Service requires members to pay to be included, and very few remain listed. It is very disappointing to the public when our staff says there isn’t anyone registered in their area that can help. We want a robust Member Directory which highlights the knowledge and skills of every psychologist and psychological associate so we can demonstrate the strength of psychology in this province. While there will be no cost to members to be listed, it takes manpower to collect the information properly and technical supports to develop an interactive, web-based directory. **This program will be vitally important to the public and key stakeholders and a great marketing strategy and referral source for our members.**

3. Psychology Aid Ontario

Building on the model of Legal Aid Ontario and our Member Directory, we would like to identify (and financially support) psychologists and psychological associates who would be willing to provide assessment and treatment for individuals who cannot afford our services. Psychology Aid Ontario would provide access to care at a reduced cost. This program will be a major benefit for the public, and an opportunity for our members to be publically recognized for the sliding scales that you already provide in your practice. **This program needs member support initially; however, Corporate Ontario and government would be targeted for ongoing donations and support.**

4. Psychology Resource Centre

This will be a section of the website where we can display influential psychology policy documents, research papers and dissertations, clinical and practice guidelines, patient education books, brochures, helpful websites and other practice supports tools. The Centre would also be populated with webinars and information about upcoming workshops and conferences aimed at our members, students and other healthcare professionals. Patient education and support books and materials and links to helpful websites would provide a wealth of information for psychologists, psychological associates and their patients. **Your donations will ensure that the result is a Centre that we can be proud to use and urge others to do so as well.**

5. The OPA Centre of Excellence in Psychological Health and Safety

The OPA and our members have become recognized as the provincial leaders in the assessment and treatment of PTSD amongst the military, veterans and first responders (police, firefighters, paramedics, correctional officers, 911 dispatchers) and other healthcare professionals exposed on a daily basis to trauma in the workplace. The OPA is currently providing a certificate program in workplace mental health for human resource professionals from over 22,000 businesses in Ontario. **The Centre would take our initial work in this arena to a grand new height in the minds of the public, government, and especially individuals suffering from occupational stress disorders.**

We have received so much wonderful feedback from the membership about the renewed energy at OPA—now, we need your help to transform more of our great ideas into reality. We have started the ball rolling but we need your support to keep it going in the right direction. So on Friday we will begin the count down.

We will ask you to visit our website (www.psych.on.ca) and to make a donation so that you can join your colleagues in making the OPA the best that it can be. We will keep you informed every step of the way on how your dollars are being used to raise the profile of psychologists and psychological associates in the province and to serve you to the best of our abilities.

Let's see if we can raise \$150,000.00 by June 1st 2015. Thanking you in advance for your kind donation.



Dr. Jane Storrie, President



Jan Kasperski, Chief Executive Officer