

Honorable Christine Elliott
Ministry of Health
College Park 5th Floor
777 Bay St.
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

December 13, 2019

Dear Minister Elliott,

On December 9 and 12, 2019, MPPs Bell, Fraser and Schreiner proudly submitted 1140 signatures by the general public to our Legislative petition on behalf of Ontarians who need publicly-funded psychotherapy. The petitions request that you immediately remove psychotherapy services from the Appropriateness Working Group deliberations with the Ontario Medical Association.

We collected these signatures in only the last four weeks. The public response was overwhelmingly against your Ministry's proposal to cap full OHIP funding for psychotherapy to 24 hours per patient per year. There are still signed petitions that were not submitted before the House rose yesterday Dec. 12, so the number of signatures will be higher. Our collective canvassed people from across Ontario on the street, in malls, offices, clinics, hospitals, food courts, hotels, classrooms, library foyers, etc. The public voice implores you to remove the proposed cap on psychotherapy coverage from the AWG negotiations.

Our patient and client collectives that sponsored the petition represent Ontarians who rely on, or have relied on, OHIP-insured intensive psychotherapy to successfully manage and rebuild our lives. We suffer from complex and chronic conditions such as childhood and intergenerational trauma, physical and sexual abuse, dissociative, psychotic and bipolar disorders; severe depression and anxiety, eating disorders, addictions, co-morbid and other extremely debilitating or life-threatening conditions. After trying non-intensive or exclusively pharmacological modes of treatment, we often searched and waited years for therapy that finally helped us. We cannot afford to buy the sessions we need without OHIP coverage.

Because intensive psychotherapy has proven essential to our health, we call on you to withdraw your Ministry's recommendation to cap full coverage for outpatient psychotherapy to 24 hours per year per patient.

Specific reasons are:

-The reduction to 24 hours per year will cause grave harm to patients currently doing intensive therapeutic work and will deny future Ontarians the opportunity for appropriate treatment.

-Children and adolescents will be particularly hit hard by insufficient treatment for serious conditions that could have lasting negative effects on their development and thus impair their chance at a productive, satisfying life.

-\$13.2M will not be saved when under-supported patients resort to ancillary social and medical services like emergency rooms, hospital admissions, municipal and provincial community supports, and law enforcement interactions. The risk of suicides will increase. At the very least, Ontarians suffering from emotional and mental debilitation will not recover or take much longer to recover, thus preventing or delaying their return to school, work and family responsibilities.

-There is no scientific reason to disregard decades of reputable evidence supporting the value of intensive psychotherapy for suitable patients and in alliance with trained professionals.

-The MOH arbitration submission makes unsupported claims about psychotherapy compared to evidence cited for other services on the list. Psychotherapy should not even be considered.

-Your Ministry seems to have relied on research papers that stereotype outpatient psychotherapy as unscientific and anachronistic, and that scapegoat the patients as healthy and wealthy. Researchers admit they do not know the characteristics of private practice patients and did not consult with clinicians or the patients themselves.

-Threats to psychotherapy funding must be assessed in public forums, not in private negotiations. Administrators in previous OHIP billing deliberations strongly recommended the inclusion of patients in the process.

If you wish to defund psychotherapy in the future, our collective insists that you first consult with Ontarians that use this essential OHIP-insured service, as part of the MOH's commitment to patient engagement. You might consider these signatures of everyday Ontarians a small part of that inclusion done on your behalf, sponsored by patients and loved ones advocating for themselves. The names we offer you represent the fraction of the voices that should be heard on the matter.

Sincerely,

Ontario Patients for Psychotherapy (Twitter and Instagram @OntarioPatients)

Dissociative Society of Canada (Twitter @DSocanada)

Sick of Cuts (Twitter @sick_of_cuts)

Our request is supported by:

- the official petitions submitted to the Ontario Legislature December 9 and 12, 2019
- online petitions and an automated email to your office:
 1. <https://you.leadnow.ca/petitions/stop-doug-ford-cuts-to-psychotherapy-1>
 2. <https://www.change.org/p/ontario-provincial-government-remove-the-cap-on-psychotherapy>
 3. <https://savingohipp psychotherapy.squarespace.com/support>
 4. <https://north99.org/tell-ford-hands-off-our-health-care/>
- Letters from various community organizations
- Private letters sent to you by Ontario psychotherapy clients and patients

cc. MPP Michael Tibollo, MPP France Gelinias, MPP Bhutla Karpoche, MPP Michael Schreiner, MPP John Fraser, AWG Co-Chairs Dr. Joshua Tepper and Dr. Paul Tenenbein