

*CCPA Ontario Anglophone Director's Report for National Board Meetings
Jacqui Synard, April, 2019*

Abstract

Serving on the National Board and representing Ontario Anglophone members has been a privilege, particularly during at this time of great change at both national and provincial levels. Having such great national colleagues, the support of Barb and Kim, and an amazing CCPA head office staff has made the experience rewarding and fulfilling. I have also appreciated the warm connections and encouragement from members province-wide.

This support is critical given the serious challenges being faced by the two-thirds of all Ontario Anglophone members who work in private practice. Their livelihood and ability to maintain a sustainable practice could be severely challenged next year as the calendar turns to 2020. These challenges stem from the potential exit of psychologists who supervise counsellors and allow our clients access to benefits via insurance companies. With some limited exceptions, the College of Psychologists of Ontario (CPO) has mandated that this practice cease as of Dec 31, 2019. It is critical to the CCPA strongly focuses on continuing addressing these issues (e.g., Third Party billing, lobbying, public awareness) and engage in contingency planning to manage risks.

Our Ontario Anglophone membership continues to increase slightly with 1,844 members as of March, which is up 5.0% from last year in April and an overall increase of 6.7% since I took over the Director role near the end of 2017. Although this number represents a net increase, it will be important to monitor both new member additions as well as cancellations (as per data provided by Tony Laderoute in my last report). The vast majority of our members are also with the provincial regulatory body The College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario (i.e. ~77% with the CRPO). Should members' incomes decline and/or some decide to exit practice, there is a risk that members will leave the CCPA or drop their CCC certification which could affect our organization.

Key activities for the past six months include: (a) advocacy/Third-Party billing work, (b) supporting the planning of a new Greater Toronto Area (GTA) CCPA event, (c) awards committee work, and (d) continued connections with members. I will brief the incoming Director Rabeea Siddique on past work and do leave things in her very capable hands!

Résumé

Faire partie du conseil national et représenter des membres anglophones de l'Ontario a été un privilège, en particulier en cette période de grands changements aux niveaux national et provincial. Grâce à mes excellents collègues nationaux, au soutien de Barb et Kim et à la qualité du personnel du siège social de l'ACCP, cette expérience a été enrichissante. J'ai également apprécié les relations chaleureuses et les encouragements des membres à l'échelle de la province.

Cet appui est essentiel compte tenu des graves problèmes auxquels font face les deux tiers des membres anglophones de l'Ontario qui exercent en pratique privée. Leurs moyens de subsistance et leur capacité à maintenir une pratique durable pourraient être sérieusement mis à l'épreuve l'année prochaine, alors que le calendrier se tourne vers 2020. Ces défis découlent de la sortie éventuelle de psychologues qui supervisent des conseillers et permettent à nos clients d'accéder à des prestations via des compagnies d'assurance. À quelques rares exceptions près, l'Ordre des psychologues de l'Ontario a ordonné que cette pratique cesse dès le 31 décembre 2019. Il est essentiel que l'ACCP s'attache fermement à continuer de régler ces problèmes (p. Ex. Facturation à un tiers, lobbying, consultation publique) et se lancer dans la planification d'urgence pour gérer les risques.

Le nombre de nos membres anglophones en Ontario continue d'augmenter légèrement, avec 1 844 membres en mars, ce qui représente une hausse de 5,0% par rapport à l'année précédente en avril, soit une augmentation globale de 6,7% depuis que j'ai assumé le poste d'administratrice vers la fin de 2017. Même si c'est une augmentation nette, il sera important de surveiller les ajouts de nouveaux membres ainsi que les annulations (selon les données fournies par Tony Laderoute dans mon dernier rapport). La grande majorité de nos membres sont également membres de l'organisme de réglementation provincial, l'Ordre des psychothérapeutes autorisés de l'Ontario (environ 77% avec l'OPAO). Si les revenus des membres diminuent et / ou si certains décident de quitter la pratique, les membres risquent de quitter l'ACCP ou de perdre leur certification CCC, ce qui pourrait affecter notre organisation.

Au cours des six derniers mois, les activités clés ont été les suivantes: (a) travail de lobbying / facturation à une tierce partie, (b) soutien à la planification d'un nouvel événement de l'ACCP de la région du Grand Toronto, (c) travail avec comité des prix et (d) continué les connexions avec les membres. Je vais informer la nouvelle administratrice, Rabeea Siddique, du travail fait dans le passé et laisser les choses entre ses mains très compétentes!

Connections and Communications

Members continue to appreciate welcome monthly e-mails as they express their excitement for being part of the CCPA. They also take advantage of the opportunity to ask questions about the organization on issues such as certification. They will often reconnect months later with questions. I also had the pleasure of connecting with many Ottawa-National Capital Region (NCR) members through monthly CCPA-NCR sponsored talks, the annual winter social, and our winter trauma workshop. Members continue to ask questions about issues ranging from internships, private practice, and of course the supervision/Third Party billing situation in Ontario.

Contributions, Celebrations, and Coming Attractions

As mentioned, key areas of contribution include over the past six months included a focus on advocacy/Third-Party billing work and supporting the initiation/planning of Greater and Toronto Area event (see below). I also provided awards committee support which included making recommendations to the incoming committee and proposing new criteria for the Robert Langlois bilingualism award which is currently quite vague.

Advocacy/Third-Party Billing: As agreed to during our November meetings, I contacted my local MPP, Lisa MacLeod when I approached her at a local community event late in the year. Ms. MacLeod was approached given that she is an important influencer in the Ontario Conservative government and she too has shared her own experiences with mental health challenges. Based on a very quick chat, she referred me to her constituency office. However, based on the brief meeting and political pressures being experienced by Ms. MacLeod due to public protests re: autism funding, I felt it would be best to not approach her on this issue at this time given the political scrutiny re: autism program changes. More broadly-speaking, it would be good to consult with Impact Communications on the merits and possible processes for CCPA members to approach their MPPs to raise awareness for possible disruptions to service due to changes in Ontario supervision coming in January 2020.

I also met with Barb MacCallum and Kim Hollihan to review the Third-Party billing report from our consultant Julie Holden. This report does continue to highlight challenges with obtaining recognition for our members by both insurance companies and employers due to (a) lack of awareness of counsellors/psychotherapists, (b) concerns about increased benefits costs, (c) challenges reaching employers with cold calls and anti-spam laws, and (d) need for more hard data. That said, there remains a strong recognition of the importance of mental health and how challenges can negatively impact employer. Given challenges in one-on-one advocacy, it was felt that it would not currently make sense to allocate the funds to hire someone to approach employers and insurance companies. Other options were discussed, including outreach to professional HR organizations and publicity/advocacy campaign with an emphasis on social media. Finally, we have achieved success in getting agreement to with be included in the work by an Ontario coalition RPIC (Registered Psychotherapists Insurance Committee) which is providing advocacy tools for counsellors and clients to approach employers and insurers. Thanks to Barb and Kim for making this happen, since our members have been requesting such tools. We will now need to work on implementation issues like protecting client privacy.

Greater Toronto Area (GTA) Event: Thanks to funds provided from the Regional Director's fund, I am pleased to report that the professional development and networking event is now open for registration. This full-day CCPA sponsored event will include a workshop on "Narrative Therapy Approaches to Depression" along with a networking lunch and will be held on June 8th in Mississauga. I would like to give a big shout out to Rabeea Siddique, her local committee, and to head office for organizing this event! Again, I'm very pleased that Rabeea will be continuing on in the role of Ontario Anglophone Director to continue to build on the momentum of this event.

Concerns and Challenges

As mentioned, the current supervision/Third-Party billing issue is the key issue facing Ontario as well as being a key strategic issue and risk concern for the CCPA nationally. Concern about what will happen in January 2020 creates a series of looming questions. Will all psychologists discontinue supervision services? Will some take action to protest the regulations of their college? Who will be able to serve clients if we can't, given the shortage of psychologists and long wait lists? What will happen to clients who can no longer afford to pay out of pocket? What is our ethical duty to clients to inform of this situation? Will counsellors have to stop seeing clients as of a certain date? Will private practitioners be able to afford to stay in business? Will they be able to make a living?

Based on this situation, I strongly advocate that we raise awareness and strive for government advocacy. We need to increase awareness of the risk of discontinuity in mental health services stemming from an unintended impact of Ontario regulation.

The key issue for Members is the ongoing concern about supervision and third-party billing challenges for private practice members which make up 2/3rd of our Ontario membership. To reiterate, the College of Psychologists has placed limitations on supervision of non-psychologists for the Controlled Act of Psychotherapy. While there is a lot of complexity and greyness in this area, there is a very real risk that the current model of counsellors being supervised by psychologists is at risk. How will our clients afford therapy in this scenario? Will private practitioners be able to stay in business?

For the sake of new Board members, I have included verbatim text from my last Board Report in italics below with options presented previously (see below). It is important to note that these issues could potentially affect up a fifth of our entire CCPA membership (~17.5% overall). I trust that everyone will work hard to support our colleagues from our CCPA family to ensure their well-being and livelihoods. We need to develop a plan which considers options such as below as well as manages and mitigates risks.

Moving forward, it is critical that we have a Board level discussion at our November meetings to evaluate our strategy in this area and report the results back to our Members who are eager to see progress. Building from our survey feedback, I would very much value your input on the following strategy options that I will present during our meetings. For the sake of expediency, here are the options to be discussed:

- (a) Organize a joint meeting between the CCPA, the Ontario College of Psychologists (CPO), and the Ontario College of Registered Psychotherapists (CRPO) to reconcile conflicting messages. (This idea is being discussed with Head Office at the time of writing).*
- (b) Write a letter to the provincial government describing the impact of proclamation of the Controlled Act and the potentially detrimental impacts on access to service and the livelihood of our members.*

- (c) Consider public awareness/advocacy to raise awareness of the issues and support political advocacy.*
- (d) Hire a Toronto-based person for a 1-2 year contract to work directly with employers and insurers to bring Third Party billing recognition of CCCs and RPs (Registered Psychotherapists) and to connect with Member advocates. With so many companies based in Ontario, this work will benefit CCPA members nationwide. (Omit for now).*
- (e) Provide members and their clients with a means to advocate for Third Party Billing either through RPIC or similar tools. This work would take advantage of Members' desire to take action and assert greater control over our profession. (In progress).*
- (f) Hold an Ontario Town Hall meeting by phone, as well as an in-person GTA event.*
- (g) Identify and plan to mitigate risks should a collapse of the current joint counsellorpsychologist service model at the end of next year (e.g., ethical duties to clients, potential loss of members/funds through dropping CCC or membership).*

TRC Actions (Truth and Reconciliation Committee)

As mentioned last report, I have re-iterated a request to the NCR chapter to consider adding an indigenous speaker to a potential list of speakers for its 2018-19 speaker's series. The NCR president has indicated that this topic is on the list to be voted on for the annual June planning meeting to select speakers.

In closing, I would like to thank both my outgoing and returning colleagues for their hard work, professionalism, and friendship during my term as Ontario Anglophone Director. The role has been as rewarding, even with all of the challenges facing Ontario. Thank you kindly for all that you have done. I look forward to staying in contact! Take care.

Regards,
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CCPA Ontario Anglophone Director