

The Role of the Mental Hospital in the 21st Century

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Presented by London Psychiatric Hospital

Welcoming Address

David Reville, Special Advisor to the Premier
on behalf of the Minister of Health

It's a pleasure to welcome you to this conference. I congratulate the planning committee for luring such an impressive faculty to London and for developing a program that promises to be stimulating.

The role of the mental hospital in the 21st century will undoubtedly be different from the role it has played in past centuries but it will be a significant role. The strategic planning process led by the Mental Health Facilities Branch is already shaping the new role. The Mission Statement adopted by the ten Provincial Psychiatric Hospitals almost a year ago sets a goal with which no one can quibble:

"...to provide for the successful treatment, rehabilitation and earliest possible reintegration of patients into the community at the most independent level."

My own experience with people with severe mental health problems is a depressing story of serial hospitalizations separated by periods of marginality in the community. It is my view that the social, economic and political consequences of mental illness can be as significant as those that flow from the psychiatric disability. I shared this view with a well-

known psychiatrist during a break in a conference we were attending. Some of you may have met Leonard Stein; all of you will know of his work in Wisconsin. I was droning on with my recipe for success in the community--a decent place to live, enough money to live on, something to do. Dr. Stein thought the recipe was okay but that psychiatry didn't have much to do with the ingredients. Clearly I'd fallen into error; I was putting inappropriate expectations on one part of the mental health system.

I'm hoping that the initiatives contemplated by the Graham Report--"Building Community Support for People"--will address all the consequences of mental illness and, in so doing, will assist you to meet your goal of the "earliest possible" and lasting reintegration of people who suffer from mental illness. It is critical that all parts of the system work together to achieve and secure that reintegration. It cannot be achieved if the provincial psychiatric hospitals march off in one direction, the psych units of general hospitals in another, the community mental health agencies in another. The Graham Report recognizes that consumers and families have to be part of the system too--and in active roles. That will make the planning more complicated, to be sure, but, in the long run, will ensure its success.

Those of us who like to spend our time designing conceptual models often forget the broader community which is beset by anxieties and fears about people with mental health problems. All of the sectors in mental health have work to do in allaying those anxieties and calming those fears.

I spoke here just over a year ago at the Canadian Mental Health Association National Conference. Since then, in Ontario and across Canada, people who care about mental health have continued to work furiously to improve the situation of people with mental health problems. In Ontario, the past year has been exciting. I've mentioned the Graham Report and the work of its implementation committees; the strategic planning process is moving ahead in the PPHs. This conference is an important event in that process. Consumers and families continue to develop and promote their agendas. Another event, exciting for me and perhaps merely interesting to others, was the election of a new government.

I've been speaking in the 1st person quite deliberately. I'm not here today

to commit the government. If, however, you've done what many have been busy doing lately--scoured the Hansards and other legislative reports for clues--you'll have found that members of the new government, while in opposition, gave not-at-all grudging support to the Graham initiatives and, in general, talked a lot about "what we owe one another as people". I feel confident that the government will want to support the initiatives the psychiatric hospitals are undertaking.

I wish you success in your deliberations. Thank you.