

Steve Lurie's letter to the Globe and Mail, December 16, 2011 in response to "A 'hiccup' could put Ontario off course as Moody's peeps"

The threat of a Moody's downgrade should not stop the provincial government from making investments that will bend the cost curve downward and improve services. For example, there is research showing that case management for people living with serious mental illness reduces costly hospitalizations by over 50%. Yet there are over 16,000 people waiting for case management services in Ontario. Supportive housing costs far less than shelters and hospitals, yet there has been no major investment since 2005, and according to a recent study done for the Mental Health Commission, there are 520,000 people living with mental illness in Canada who are homeless or vulnerably housed. In Ontario over 42,000 are waiting for supportive housing. Paradoxically the investments in community mental health services proposed by Senator Michael Kirby five years ago would add only 0.29% to annual health spending, but would improve access and quality of care, while making the system more efficient. The Ontario government needs to consider the costs of not investing in community capacity, as it develops plans to reduce spending while protecting hospitals and schools.

Steve Lurie