

**346 words**

***Mental Health International's Bill Wilkerson, LL. D. (Hon) appeals to New Brunswick Premier Blaine Higgs to Order Independent investigation of Saint John Regional Hospital.***

PORT HOPE, ONTARIO (July 2, 2021) – Six month's after the death by suicide of her daughter, Hillary Hooper, while in the care of Saint John Regional Hospital, Patricia Borthwick has been informed that Horizon Health Network is "investigating" the hospital's psychiatric care unit.

In a letter to Ms. Borthwick, Horizon Vice-President Jean Daigle says "the following two recommendations were approved by our quality-of-care committee and action plans are being developed for their implementation." That is, Horizon will:

"Investigate procuring ligature-resistant door frames, designs or door designs for inpatient psychiatry units and the establishment of a 'Crisis Stabilization Unit' for increased structure and observation for patients in crisis requiring short-term intervention."

Premier Higgs and Dr. Wilkerson exchanged correspondence in April. In a 2<sup>nd</sup> letter to the Premier, dated July 2, (full text available at [www.mentalhealthinternational.ca](http://www.mentalhealthinternational.ca)), Dr. Wilkerson called Horizon's plans to "investigate" the hospital a "real revelation."

He urged the Premier "to consider putting Saint John Regional Hospital under provincial supervision to ensure these investigations are carried out by independent experts in psychiatric service and protective suicide risk management."

Further, Dr. Wilkerson decried the callous manner in which the hospital and Horizon frustrated Ms. Borthwick as she pled fruitlessly for six months for any information. One of the most highly-ranked risk factors for suicide is the loss of a family member. Ms. Borthwick bore that burden.

Dr. Wilkerson says the suicide rate in New Brunswick was the highest among Canada's ten provinces as recent as 2012, and is consistently higher than the national average.

"New Brunswick hospitals should be on alert not asleep at the switch," he said, "this case is a troubling wake-up call and I encourage general hospitals in Canada to do special suicide-sensitive, life-protective audits of psychiatric services, systems, training and care.

**Refer: Bill Wilkerson, LL. D. (Hon) – McMaster University, Executive Chairman, Mental Health International; [bill.wilkerson@mentalhealthinternational.ca](mailto:bill.wilkerson@mentalhealthinternational.ca); 001-905-885-1751.** Dr. Wilkerson is an eight-time award-winning, internationally-recognized mental health advocate.