

May 16, 2012

David S. Goldbloom
Chair, Mental Health Commission of Canada
10301 Southport Lane, SW. Suite 800,
Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2W 1S7

Re: Mental Health Strategy for Canada

Dear Dr. Goldbloom,

The Schizophrenia Society of Ontario would like to applaud the Mental Health Commission of Canada on the release of *Changing Directions, Changing Lives*, Canada's first strategy to improve the mental health of all Canadians. This is a crucial step towards ensuring that everyone affected by mental illnesses have access to the right combination of comprehensive services and supports they need and deserve

The Schizophrenia Society of Ontario is a non-profit province-wide organization with a mission to make a positive difference in the lives of people, families and communities affected by Schizophrenia and Psychotic Illnesses. Reaching over 30,000 people each year, we are the largest organization representing people affected by schizophrenia in Ontario.

Advocating to improve the quality of life for people affected by serious mental illnesses has always been a strong priority for the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario. As an organization we strongly believe that:

- Schizophrenia and psychotic illnesses are treatable brain disorders.
- 1 in 100 Canadians will develop schizophrenia in his/her lifetime; most at risk are young people in their late teens and early twenties.
- For a good quality of life people need medical, economic, social, family and community supports.
- Discrimination and social isolation are the reality for many people living with schizophrenia and psychotic illnesses, but education and awareness make a difference.

As such, the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario commends the Commission for developing a comprehensive recovery-oriented framework for action that promotes mental health, prevents mental illnesses wherever possible, and calls for a mental health system that can truly meet the needs of people of all ages living with schizophrenia and psychotic illnesses and their families.

Our organization and many of our members participated in the consultations organized by the Commission to develop this strategy. We are very pleased that the final report reflects the feedback that Commission received from individuals living with serious mental illnesses and their families. We are further pleased that the strategy emphasizes that families are "critical partners" in the journey to recovery and provides concrete recommendations for ensuring that families receive care, support and respect.

The Schizophrenia Society of Ontario endorses the recommendations proposed by the Commission and we look forward to working with the Commission towards full implementation of this strategy.

Thank you again!

Best Regards,



Mary Alberti
Chief Executive Officer
Schizophrenia Society of Ontario



Paul King-Fisher
Board Chair
Schizophrenia Society of Ontario

CC: Louise Bradley, Mental Health Commission of Canada, President and CEO
Michael Kirby, Chair, Partners for Mental Health