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SCHIZOPHRENIA SOCIETY OF CANADA  
SOCIÉTÉ CANADIENNE DE LA SCHIZOPHRÉNIE  
UNE SOURCE D'ESPOIR, DE SOUTIEN ET D'ENTRAIDE.

PRESS RELEASE  
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## **Schizophrenia Society of Canada applauds the release of the first Mental Health Strategy for Canada**

**Tuesday, May 8, 2012, Ottawa, ON** — Renea Mohammed, a person who lives with schizophrenia and a board member of The Schizophrenia Society of Canada applauds the release of Canada's first strategy to improve the mental health of all Canadians.

"This is a real chance for Canada to finally get it right as to the right kind of mental health services we need across Canada. Mohammed who is a Peer Support Program Coordinator with Vancouver Coastal Health, feels strongly that Canada needs a recovery-oriented mental health system that addresses both consumer and family needs.

*Changing Directions, Changing Lives: The Mental Health Strategy for Canada* was unveiled today by the Mental Health Commission of Canada. The plan focuses on improving mental health and well-being for all people living in Canada and on creating a mental health system that can truly meet the needs of people of all ages living with mental health problems and illnesses and their families.

"Canada badly needs this plan to improve the way we as a country and all Canadians treat mental health problems and illnesses," said Chris Summerville, CEO of the Schizophrenia Society of Canada. "We applaud the Commission for putting together a clear plan that puts Canada on course for real change so that everyone who confronts schizophrenia or any other type of severe mental illness or mental health problem and their families will be able to count on the right combination of services, treatments and supports, where and when people need them."

The Schizophrenia Society of Canada is very pleased to see the emphasis that the Strategy has placed on the needs of families, recognizing that 'families are critical partners in the recovery journey.' The strategy is absolutely right to state that families often provide the bulk of support and care and need access to adequate information and resources. As the Strategy says, 'failure to support families undermines mental health across the population, leads to poorer outcomes for people living with mental health problems and illnesses, and increases costs to the system'<sup>1</sup>.

The Mental Health Strategy for Canada makes a number of recommendations for actions that are particularly important for people living with schizophrenia and their families. Amongst these, we would highlight the following:

- Enhance support for families to foster recovery and well-being, provide care, and meet their own needs in handling stress and loss.
- Improve knowledge among service providers, people with mental health problems and illnesses, and their families on the best ways to involve families while respecting confidentiality.
- Increase the active involvement of people living with mental health problems and illnesses and their families in governance, accreditation, monitoring, and advisory bodies in the service system.
- Establish benchmarks for the availability of intensive, acute, and highly specialized treatments and services for people of all ages living with severe or complex mental health problems and illnesses.
- Expand approaches such as ‘housing first’ for homeless people living with mental health problems or illnesses.
- Help caregivers with better financial supports, increased access to respite care, and more flexible workplace policies.
- Establish guidelines to ensure that people living with mental health problems and illnesses — as well as their families — have leadership roles in developing and implementing mental health policies.
- Build the capacity of local, regional and national organizations, led by and representing the interests of people living with mental health problems and illnesses, to ensure that their voices are heard.

Many members from the Schizophrenia Society of Canada and its provincial organizations participated in the many discussions and meetings the Commission organized to build the Strategy. “We are excited to have participated in the first-ever Mental Health Strategy, says Florence Budden, President of the SSC, and we look forward to continue working with the Commission and all our partners to implement these recommendations and change our mental health landscape.”

## **ABOUT THE SCHIZOPHRENIA SOCIETY OF CANADA**

SSC is a national registered charity that has been in operation since 1979. Our mission: To improve the quality of life for those affected by schizophrenia and psychosis through education, support programs, public policy, and research.

Working with 10 provincial societies, the SSC endeavours to help individuals with schizophrenia and their families have a better quality of life while we search for a cure. At SSC we are committed to:

- Raising awareness and educating the public to help reduce stigma and discrimination,
- Supporting families and individuals,
- Advocating for legislative change and improved treatment and services, and
- Supporting research through the SSC Foundation and other independent efforts.

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**REFERENCE**

- 1 Mental Health Commission of Canada. (2012). *Changing Directions, Changing Lives: The Mental Health Strategy for Canada*, p. 38. Calgary, AB: Author.