



Attention: National News Editors, Health Editors

## **Schizophrenia Society of Canada welcomes report on mental illness and encourages move towards implementation**

*Toronto, Ontario...May 9, 2006* – The final report of a Senate Standing Committee on the state of mental health services is a welcome first step towards establishing a vitally-needed national strategy to deal with mental illness and mental health issues, according to the Schizophrenia Society of Canada (SSC).

“This report provides a blueprint to build an innovative and leading edge mental health system that will enhance services and outcomes for Canadians living with psychiatric illnesses,” said SSC President John Gray. “We congratulate the Senate Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology for its important work and Senator Kirby for his leadership on this initiative.”

A key recommendation previously tabled by the Committee was the establishment of a Canadian Mental Health Commission that would mobilize federal, provincial and territorial governments, as well as non-governmental organizations, to gather information on the state of mental illness and address service needs in a coordinated and comprehensive fashion. This would provide an accurate picture of the mental health system in Canada and ensure that services are equitable and accessible across the country.

“We encourage the Federal Government to move quickly to implement the recommendations of the Committee, particularly the establishment of a Canadian Mental Health Commission,” said SSC Chief Executive Officer Mary Jardine. “The sooner these measures are put in place, the sooner we will begin to see improvements for all Canadians living with mental illness.”

The SSC was pleased to be part of Senator Kirby's consultation during the Committee review and looks forward to working with the government, partner organizations and stakeholders

to put the report into action. As an organization representing people living with schizophrenia and their families, the SSC believes it is imperative that consumers, families and caregivers have a voice in this process.

“These individuals are uniquely equipped to provide insight into the mental health services and supports that will improve overall outcomes and improve quality of life for people living with one of the most severe forms of mental illness,” said Ms. Jardine.

The SSC, founded in 1979, is dedicated to alleviating the suffering caused by schizophrenia and related mental disorders. Its membership includes people living with schizophrenia and related mental disorders, their family and friends, and mental health professionals who work directly with consumers and their families. The SSC works with 10 provincial societies and their over 100 chapters, branches and regions in a federation model to: raise awareness and educate the public in order to reduce stigma and discrimination; support families and individuals; advocate for legislative change; and support research through the SSC Foundation and other independent efforts.

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