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Advocacy Resources:

Sample Letter to Government Representative

The following letter was used during the SSC's 2006- 2007 successful advocacy campaign for the Canadian Mental Health Commission. Our efforts, along with those of many other organizations and individuals, were rewarded in March 2007 when the federal government announced the establishment of the Mental Health Commission of Canada.

This sample letter below was written to a Member of Parliament to ask for support for the Canadian Mental Health Commission. You will need to customize your own letter to provide information about your issue and what actions you would like the representative to take, but this letter provides a sample of the format and the tone that can be used.

Sample Letter:

(Name) Member of Parliament (Constituency)

(Street Address)

(City, Town) (Postal Code)

(Date)

Dear (Mr. Ms. Mrs.) (Surname),

I am writing as one of your constituents to express my concerns as someone affected by mental illness, and to ask for your help.

On May 9, 2006 the Senate Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology released its final report on mental illness and mental health entitled *Out of the Shadows at Last*. The document provides a blueprint to build an innovative and leading edge mental health system that will enhance services and outcomes for all Canadians living with psychiatric illness.

The report, prepared by Senator Michael Kirby and his colleagues, contains recommendations related to services, service delivery, research, accessibility, support and other aspects of treatment and care for people living with mental illnesses. Many organizations in Canada support the intent of the report and have been encouraging the federal government to move forward on implementation.

I am writing to you as my elected representative because I want Ottawa to move quickly on a key recommendation previously tabled by the Committee: the establishment of a Canadian Mental Health Commission. Such a body 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.

Unfortunately, no action has been taken to date, despite the call in the report for the Commission to be up and running by September 1, 2006.

During the last federal election campaign, the Conservative Party of Canada expressed its support for a national commission on mental health in a letter to the Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health, stating, the Conservative Party of Canada and Member of Parliament (and then Health Critic) Steven Fletcher “have long called for a Mental Health Commission of Canada and a Conservative government will ensure that such a commission is established.”

Now is the time to put these words into action. That is why I am asking you to write to the Minister of Health to request that he immediately establish and fund the Canadian Mental Health Commission.

Your willingness to take action now will demonstrate your support for a Canadian Mental Health Commission and the vital first step towards a national strategy on mental illness. The sooner it is operational, the sooner we will begin to see improvements for individuals and families affected by mental illness.

Thank you for your commitment.

I look forward to receiving a response from you.

Sincerely,

(Your Name)

(Street Address)

(Town, Province)

(Postal Code)

(Phone Number if applicable)