



A REASON TO HOPE · THE MEANS TO COPE  
SCHIZOPHRENIA SOCIETY OF ONTARIO  
SOCIÉTÉ ONTARIENNE DE LA SCHIZOPHRÉNIE  
UNE SOURCE D'ESPOIR · DE SOUTIEN ET D'ENTRAIDE

HONORARY PATRON  
THE HON. DAVID C. ONLEY  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR OF ONTARIO

August 10, 2012

Honorable Jason Kenney  
Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism  
325 East Block  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

**Re: *Faster Removal of Foreign Criminals Act***

Dear Minister Kenney,

We are writing to you from the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario in regards to the new legislative changes that you proposed in the area of immigration law through *Faster Removal of Foreign Criminals Act*.

The Schizophrenia Society of Ontario is a non-profit charitable organization with a mission to make a positive difference in the lives of people, families and communities affected by Schizophrenia and Psychotic Illnesses. We are the largest organization representing people affected by schizophrenia and psychosis in Ontario.

Through our Justice and Mental Health Program we often hear about the challenges that individuals and their families encounter when dealing with both the mental health and the criminal justice systems. People with mental illnesses are coming into contact with the law at an increasing rate. Evidence shows that this criminal involvement is often due to the individual's illness and their inability to access treatment in a fragmented mental health care and social services system. While there have been improvements within the criminal justice system to de-criminalize these individuals, our immigration system has not shown such sensitivity. As a result, many individuals with mental illnesses who do not hold Canadian citizenship are being subject to deportation orders on the basis of criminality or serious criminality under the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*.

In 2010, our organization heard from immigration lawyers, mental health workers, and ethno-specific community workers about the gravity of this issue and the practical solutions which could be pursued to improve this process for these vulnerable individuals. This research culminated into a discussion paper which is included with this correspondence for your convenience. The overarching finding from our research showed that our current immigration process does not consistently take into account the role of mental illness in the conviction nor the mental health needs of the potential deportee. Through this research, we further learned that people with mental illnesses are often deported to countries where mental health treatments and supports are substandard, unavailable and inaccessible, and where they are often subject to physical abuse and severe human rights violations.

The Schizophrenia Society of Ontario is therefore extremely concerned about the dire immigration consequences of criminalization, particularly if the provisions of the *Faster Removal of Foreign Criminals Act* become law. We understand that the intention of this legislation is to promote greater protection for the Canadian society and ensure that our immigration system is fair; yet a number of the proposed reforms under this *Act* will have a disproportionate effect on people with mental illnesses. For example, introducing mandatory minimum conditions, setting harsher consequences for breaches of conditions and removing the right to appeal under the Humanitarian and Compassionate grounds, will have a devastating impact on persons with mental illnesses.



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The Schizophrenia Society of Ontario strongly encourages your government to ensure that our immigration system is responsive to the needs of people with mental illnesses by including specific provisions and protections for adults and youth living with these conditions within all immigration legislation, policies and protocols.

We look forward to continue our work with your government to improve the quality of life for people with mental illnesses. We would very much appreciate an opportunity to meet with to discuss this further and how the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario can be of assistance to you and your staff. For more information, please do not hesitate to contact Irina Sytcheva, Manager of Policy and Community Relations, at [isytcheva@schizophrenia.on.ca](mailto:isytcheva@schizophrenia.on.ca) or (416) 449-6830 x255.

Sincerely,

Paul King-Fisher  
President, Board of Directors  
Schizophrenia Society of Ontario

Mary Alberti  
Chief Executive Officer  
Schizophrenia Society of Ontario

CC Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada  
Vic Toews, Minister of Public Safety  
John Baird, Minister of Foreign Affairs