

February 20, 2014

Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police
40 College Street, Suite 605
Toronto, Ontario, M5G 2J3

RE: Non-Conviction Records: OACP Consultation and Recommendations

Dear members of the OACP,

I am writing to you from the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario (SSO), in response to the disclosure of non-conviction records on police background checks.

The Schizophrenia Society of Ontario is a non-profit charitable organization dedicated to making 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. Since our inception in 1979, the SSO established our expertise in the realm of serious mental illnesses through counseling and system navigation support to individuals and caregivers; public education and professional training; research; designated youth programs; and public policy analysis and development.

In November 2013, the SSO participated in a consultation hosted by the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police (OACP) LEARN Sub-Committee and the Canadian Civil Liberties Association (CCLA) focused on amending the LEARN guideline to exclude non-conviction records from police background checks. It is our understanding that the recommendations developed as a result of that public consideration pertaining to how policing organizations deal with non-conviction records are currently being considered by the OACP.

The Schizophrenia Society of Ontario strongly supports the direction currently being considered to prevent the release of non-conviction records. As an organization that works with individuals and families affected by mental illnesses, we are concerned about the release of non-conviction records on police checks in Ontario as these records often include police contact information arising from apprehensions under the Mental Health Act and charges that were stayed or withdrawn as a result of mental health court diversion.

The release of non-conviction information can undermine volunteer, educational and employment opportunities and even cross-border travel for individuals with mental illnesses. Not only does this practice preclude social inclusion of this already marginalized group, it further has negative impact on mental health recovery. Community safety is important - but these types of records are not helping us keep our vulnerable community members safe. On



the contrary, they further disadvantage people with mental illnesses and pose significant barriers to social inclusion and participation.

The SSO applauds the OACP for being proactive on this issue. We look forward to your continued support for individuals and families affected by mental illnesses in Ontario.

Sincerely,



Mary Alberti
CEO
Schizophrenia Society of Ontario

CC Madeleine Meilleur, Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services
Abby Dushman, Canadian Civil Liberties Association