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November 27, 2006

The Honourable Tony Clement  
Minister of Health  
Health Canada  
Brooke Claxton Building, Tunney's Pasture  
Postal Locator 0906C  
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada  
K1A 0K9

Dear Minister Clement,

RE: Canadian Mental Health Commission and Citizens Living With  
Developmental Disabilities and Dual Diagnosis

Please accept this letter on behalf of the National Association of Dual Diagnosis, (NADD) Canadian Policy Committee, and the Canadian Association of Research and Education in Intellectual Disability/ Association Canadienne pour la Recherche et l'Enseignement en Deficience Intellectuelle (CARE-ID/ACREDI). We understand that the recommendations of the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, *Out of the Shadows at Last*, and in particular, implementation of a Canadian Mental Health Commission, are being given serious consideration by your government. We are writing at this time in full support of such a direction, as it will benefit all citizens who experience mental health difficulties, but in particular a very vulnerable and marginalized group that was given limited attention in the final report.

The citizens of Canada that we are referring to are those with a developmental disability (also known as intellectual disability), who number between 1 and 3% of the population (approximately 360,000 and 1 million Canadians). Persons with developmental disability experience higher rates of physical illnesses. In addition, it is generally accepted in the field that 30% of individuals with a developmental disability experience psychiatric difficulties (also known as dual diagnosis), affecting between 136,000 and 380,000

Canadians, a much higher rate of incidence when compared to the "normal" population who experience mental disorders. Both the physical and mental illnesses are often undiagnosed and untreated because of the unique difficulties these individuals face in receiving appropriate medical care.

We are respectfully requesting the inclusion of the Dually Diagnosed population, (individuals with a developmental disability and mental disorder) by way of a subcommittee within the Commission. In addition to our two organizations this subcommittee would include organizations such as the Canadian Association for Community Living and the Autism Society. This is only a guideline and can be expanded as felt appropriate.

Unfortunately, Canada lags behind other developed nations, in particular the United Kingdom and United States in establishing a national vision for how individuals with developmental disabilities are to live as part of the fabric of our society. Therefore the mission of this subcommittee would be to facilitate national approaches, provide a catalyst for reform, public education, and decrease stigma and discrimination. This could occur through the examination of existing reports and documents in Canada and other countries (such as USA, Australia and the United Kingdom). The outcome would comprise a national strategy to address stigma and discrimination, and identify an agenda for research and care guidelines.

We look forward to the successful implementation of the Canadian Mental Health Commission and look forward to an opportunity to discuss how the needs of Canadian citizens with a dual diagnosis can be integrated within the mandate of the Commission.

Respectfully Submitted,

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