

Get the Facts:

THE BC MENTAL HEALTH ACT = “THE RIGHT TO BE WELL”

- Approximately one in 100 people worldwide suffer from schizophrenia—about 40,000 of our BC neighbours.
- Due to a chemical imbalance that affects the brain, many people who become acutely ill are unable to recognize their illness. That means they are unable to voluntarily exercise their right to available treatment—*because of the very nature of their disability*. **The BC Mental Health Act is about the care and protection of our citizens who are victims of such illnesses.**
- Early treatment and stabilization on medication greatly improves the prognosis for people with chronic and severe brain diseases. New and better antipsychotic medications continue to become available, and there is a great explosion of information being generated by the new brain research. Many people can now, *with timely and adequate treatment and support*, live satisfactory lives in the community.
- Involuntary hospitalization of people who are too ill to care for themselves should never be equated with incarceration in the criminal justice system. To do so not only adds to outdated stigma and prejudice about people with mental illness—it also deprives them of their *fundamental right to proper medical treatment and care*.
- Unfortunately, such confusion is common. As a result, there are already far too many people with severe and chronic brain diseases such as schizophrenia who have “fallen through the cracks” of the system. They have been abandoned to our streets and prisons simply because they are not well enough to seek treatment for themselves.
- It is a scandal that many people who are severely ill—and for whom effective treatment is available—are literally dying of neglect. Furthermore, suicide rates among this population are alarmingly high. For example, 50% of all people with schizophrenia will attempt to commit suicide; 12% to 15% will succeed.
- *If we fail to advocate for the essential right to treatment under the Mental Health Act, this situation will worsen.*

THE PURPOSE OF THE BC MENTAL HEALTH ACT IS TO HELP PEOPLE WHO ARE SERIOUSLY ILL RECEIVE THE MEDICAL TREATMENT AND CARE THEY NEED AND DESERVE SO THAT THEY CAN REGAIN THEIR HEALTH.



A REASON TO HOPE. THE MEANS TO COPE.
BRITISH COLUMBIA SCHIZOPHRENIA SOCIETY