



January 31, 2012

Honourable Rob Nicholson  
Minister of Justice and  
Attorney General of Canada  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Honourable Vic Toews  
Minister of Public Safety  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Nicholson and Minister Toews,

The Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health (CAMIMH) is an alliance of mental health organizations comprised of health providers and organizations representing persons with mental illness and their families and caregivers. CAMIMH's mandate is to ensure that mental health is placed on the national agenda in order to improve the mental health of all Canadians and ensure that persons with a lived experience of mental illness and their families receive appropriate access to care and support.

Bill C-10 *The Safe Streets and Communities Act*, seeks to attain justice and reduce crime by placing mandatory minimum sentences on a number of offences in the Criminal Code of Canada. CAMIMH is concerned that mandatory minimum sentences will likely result in systematic discrimination of certain groups already over-represented in the criminal justice system in Canada.

As you are aware, the Correctional Investigator, Howard Sapers, has repeatedly cautioned that federal penitentiaries are fast becoming our nation's largest psychiatric facilities and repositories for people with mental illness and that the number of offenders demonstrating serious mental health problems is growing. As the Senate Committee undertakes its review of the legislation, CAMIMH is requesting that the government consider adopting amendments that would allow judges to have discretion in sentencing.

#### CAMIMH Members

Autism Society of Canada

Canadian Association for  
Suicide Prevention

Canadian Association of  
Occupational Therapists

Canadian Association of Social  
Workers

Canadian Coalition for Seniors  
Mental Health

Canadian Counselling and  
Psychotherapy Association

Canadian Federation of Mental  
Health Nurses

Canadian Healthcare  
Association

Canadian Medical Association

Canadian Mental Health  
Association

Canadian Psychological  
Association

Canadian Psychiatric  
Association

The College of Family  
Physicians Canada

Canadian Psychiatric Research  
Foundation

Mood Disorders Society of  
Canada

National Network for Mental  
Health

Psychosocial Rehabilitation  
Canada

Registered Psychiatric Nurses  
of  
Canada

Schizophrenia Society of  
Canada

#### Affiliate Members

Union of Psychiatric Nurses  
of BC

In addition, the federal government should look for ways to improve access to mental health and addiction services for all Canadians including prisoners after they come in conflict with the law. Mental illness and mental health have been neglected in Canada for far too long.

Yours sincerely,



Dr. John Higenbottam  
CAMIMH , Co-Chair



Dave Gallson  
CAMIMH, Co-Chair