



CANADIAN MENTAL
HEALTH ASSOCIATION
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE
POUR LA SANTÉ MENTALE

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR DIVISION

CMHA-NL MEDIA RELEASE

(October 29, 2010 – St. John’s) A series of troubling comments made by significant political figures in our province were recently revealed to the public. It became known that a current political figure had suggested the Premier of the province was mentally ill. The comments were made in the context of questioning the Premier’s capacity to do his job. Shortly after they were made public, a major political figure stated these comments were made as a joke or “lark”.

Within a day, these figures apologized to the Canadian Mental Health Association - NL, CHANNAL, the Schizophrenia Society of Newfoundland and Labrador, and the public at large. They acknowledged the comments were inappropriate, insensitive and contributed to the continuing stigmatization of persons living with the experience of mental illness.

We at the Canadian Mental Health Association applaud these individuals for their apologies. It is truly heartening to live in a time when it has become almost socially impossible to sow such disparaging stereotypes about a group of human beings who have long been stigmatized.

Yet, persons with the lived experience of mental illness remain a legitimate target in the minds of some. They are among the last targetable minorities. The reason behind this is clear: persons with mental health concerns are prevented from achieving political unity by virtue of both the internal realities of their daily struggles, and the continued existence of stigma. Until stigma is destroyed, countless numbers will continue to suffer in voiceless silence.

In Canada, one in five persons will have a mental health problem at some point in their lives. Most persons with a mental illness are working successfully alongside us every day. They are handling their professional obligations well and are making good decisions and behaving like anyone would. Their community is enormous but often invisible. It is present in and around all levels of our entire society, from Confederation Building to Her Majesty’s Penitentiary and everywhere in between.

A time is coming when stigmatizing a person with a mental illness for any reason will be completely unthinkable. We at the Canadian Mental Health Association stand with our peers at CHANNAL, the Schizophrenia Society and countless others in the mental health community in solidarity as we move toward that day. We encourage everyone to do the same.

For more information about mental health and mental illness, please visit the CMHA-NL website at www.cmhanl.ca, or contact us:

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