

Proposed “Tim’s Law”

MSS Official Statement, March 9, 2009

Like many Canadians, we were saddened by the Li case and sympathize with the McLean family as they struggle to come to terms with the tragic loss of their son Timothy.

The Manitoba Schizophrenia Society is, however, concerned about the negative or limited information that exists regarding individuals with schizophrenia. This has been evident in the recent case of Vincent Li.

While we understand and empathize with Timothy’s mother and the McLean family and support their concern for public safety, we do not believe that the proposed "Tim's Law", which would have individuals deemed Not Criminally Responsible (NCR) incarcerated for life, is the solution.

Schizophrenia is a treatable brain illness, and those who receive treatment are no more likely to be violent than members of the general population. We must remember that it is not the person who commits the crime, it is the illness. Mr. Li had no history of violence, and his schizophrenia remained untreated.

The current Manitoba Review Board structure, in which people remain in forensic hospitals undergoing treatment until they are deemed not to pose a risk to the public, is the most effective way we believe the law can balance public safety with the rights of individuals with mental illness.