



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 4, 2010

**LIFE AND DEATH OF ROSS ALLAN AND THE CORONER'S INQUEST
THAT COULD CHANGE MENTAL HEALTH CARE IN BRITISH COLUMBIA**

Ross Allan should still be alive. When he was apprehended by police under the Mental Health Act and taken to hospital, he should have received care and treatment in the psychiatric ward. Instead, Ross spent two days in the chaos of the emergency department, and committed suicide in a staff washroom, as he had threatened to do. How was a young man with acute schizophrenia, at extremely high risk of suicide, left unattended despite staff being told over and over by his parents that he needed to be watched?

Kim and Lynn Allan will talk about their son's five-year struggle with schizophrenia, his preventable death, and the coroner's inquest, at our next public education evening on **Wednesday, March 10 at 7:30 p.m. in the auditorium at Lions Gate Hospital.**

The coroner's inquest into Ross Allan's death produced a record 43 recommendations. Top of the list: "that specific training and/or refresher courses be provided to physicians with respect to the legal test for committal under section 22 of the Mental Health Act." Another key recommendation by the inquest jury: "that physicians are reminded of the importance of obtaining collateral information from family and caregivers in the assessment process." Also recommended was that, at all hospitals, one on one constant observation be required in the emergency department for any patient admitted involuntarily. The full report of findings and recommendations is available at www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/coroners/schedule/docs/verdict-allan-2009-jun-10.pdf.

Ross Allan's story is tragic, but also one of hope and the promise of positive change. The Allans are working with the Fraser Health Authority as they plan and implement many of the recommendations made in the coroner's inquest report. Their tireless work, including active participation in the inquest itself, will help prevent the same mistakes from being made again and will help save lives in the future.

As Lynn Allan said recently, "It is too late for Ross, but there are so many others out there."

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