

NEWS RELEASE

CanFASD urges politicians to make FASD part of the conversation this election

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(October 17, 2019) Organizations across the nation are asking Canadians to make Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) part of the conversation during the 2019 Federal Election.

The movement began at the end of September, as the Canada Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Research Network (CanFASD) released content urging Canadians to ask electoral candidates where FASD fits on their election platform.

FASD is a diagnostic term used to describe the impacts on the brain and body of someone who was exposed to alcohol before birth. Each person with FASD has both strengths and challenges. **There is no cure for FASD**, but proper supports and resources that play to their strengths can help individuals with FASD live successful, meaningful lives.

Approximately 4% of Canadians, 1.4 million people, have FASD. It affects more people than autism, cerebral palsy, and Down's syndrome combined. However, researchers believe that number is higher than estimated. The stigma surrounding alcohol use and pregnancy and the lack of FASD specific training for medical professionals can significantly affect the rate of diagnosis.

Despite its prevalence, FASD has not been widely discussed during this election. Audrey McFarlane, Executive Director at CanFASD believes this is a mistake, "Why are 1.4 million people not being discussed during this election? This is the largest population of disabled people in Canada that no one is talking about. We can do better."

FASD is costly from both a social and economic standpoint because of the wide range of possible negative consequences. Individuals with FASD and their families need extra supports and resources across all sectors in order to overcome the challenges they face. Research estimates that FASD costs Canadian taxpayers approximately 9.7 billion dollars each year. Funding for FASD prevention, diagnosis, and treatment initiatives can significantly reduce that cost.

FASD is a preventable disability, resulting from prenatal alcohol exposure (PAE). CanFASD stresses that consuming alcohol during pregnancy is not as simple as "choosing not to". Factors such as addiction, trauma, abusive relationships, misinformation, unplanned pregnancies and lack of awareness may contribute to PAE.

"Prevention initiatives are complicated. However, we know we can reduce the number of people born with this disability if we devote funding and resources to awareness campaigns, addiction services, supports for victims of domestic abuse, and widespread access to contraception."

CanFASD points to the work the government of Australia has done to develop a national strategy to address FASD in Australia, and stresses the need for government of Canada to show strong leadership to address the complexities of FASD.

“Families and individuals with FASD are struggling in Canada, having poor outcomes because of the lack of supports and evidence informed information. Canada can do better to support the prevention of this disorder and provide support to those with it,” says McFarlane.

Our society needs to make FASD a consideration in this election, and the first step forward is making FASD part of the conversation. For more information about FASD, please read CanFASD’s Backgrounder at <https://canfasd.ca/media/canfasd-background-information/>

Quotes:

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About CanFASD:

CanFASD is Canada’s first national Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) research network. CanFASD works collaboratively with researchers and partners across the nation to address complexities of FASD. Our mission is to produce and maintain national, collaborative research for all Canadians, leading to prevention strategies and improved support services for people affected by Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

To speak with a CanFASD expert regarding FASD and the 2019 Federal Election, please contact:

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For more information on CanFASD, please visit:

<http://www.canfasd.ca/>