

STATEMENT

Raising Awareness About FASD and the Need for Stronger Alcohol Related Public Health Policy in Canada

(9 September 2024, Ottawa) Canada marks Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Awareness Day and FASD Awareness Month to bring attention to the critical issue of alcohol consumption during pregnancy. FASD, a lifelong condition caused by prenatal alcohol exposure, remains the leading cause of preventable developmental disability in Canada. This disorder can affect both brain and body development, resulting in significant challenges for those living with FASD - including mental health issues, learning disabilities, and substance use. It is estimated that 4% of Canadian population is living with FASD, among the highest prevalence rates in the developed world.

While there is no cure for FASD, early intervention, appropriate support, and a strong public health framework are essential in managing the condition and improving outcomes for individuals, families and communities across the country.

The risks associated with alcohol extend beyond FASD. Excessive alcohol consumption is a significant public health concern that cannot be ignored in Canada, contributing to a wide range of health issues, including liver disease, cancer, addiction, and mental health disorders. The need for comprehensive policies to address these risks has never been more urgent.

This is where Senate [Bill S-253](#) An Act respecting a national framework for fetal alcohol spectrum disorder and [S-254](#) An Act to amend the Food and Drugs Act (warning label on alcoholic beverages) play a crucial role. Senate Bill S-254 seeks to introduce mandatory labeling on alcohol products, providing clear warnings about the risks of alcohol consumption, including the risk of FASD. Bill S-253 provides for the development of a national framework designed to support Canadians with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, their families and their caregivers

By supporting these bills, the federal government can take a significant step toward preventing the harm caused by alcohol and preventing FASD. Implementing these measures will help raise awareness about the dangers of alcohol consumption, promote informed choices, and ultimately protect public health across Canada.

As we observe FASD Awareness Day and FASD Awareness Month this year, we encourage Canadians to learn more about FASD, support those living with the disorder, and advocate for stronger public health policies as they relate to alcohol consumption. The theme for this year's

FASD awareness month is “Everyone has a role to play”. By working together, we can create a safer, healthier future for all Canadians.

Quotes:

“As a rural family physician for over thirty-five years, I have seen the need for a coordinated, interdisciplinary approach to addressing the disparities in FASD prevention, diagnosis, and support across Canada. Bill S-253 is an important step towards providing access to equitable, culturally appropriate, and comprehensive care,” says **Senator Mohamed Ravalia**

“I wholeheartedly support Bill S-253 and the need for a national strategy to address the staggering implications of FASD. Bill S-253 and Bill S-254, An Act to Amend the Food and Drugs Act to include alcohol warning labels that I introduced in 2022, work together to ensure Canadians have full knowledge of the negative and life-changing impacts of alcohol consumption. The time is now to act towards prevention, education and support of a fetal alcohol spectrum disorder national framework,” says **Senator Patrick Brazeau**.

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.

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For more information on FASD, please visit: www.canfasd.ca