

Alcohol and Pregnancy Don't Mix
Provincial Campaign Encourages Alcohol-free Pregnancies

(Insert City, Insert Date) -- Best Start: Ontario's Maternal, Newborn and Early Child Development Resource Centre is launching a province-wide campaign to increase awareness of the dangers of drinking alcohol while pregnant.

"Prenatal exposure to alcohol is the leading known cause of preventable brain damage in Canada," says Wendy Burgoyne, Health Promotion Consultant, Best Start. "We want to help spread the word about the dangers of drinking alcohol while pregnant." To be completely safe, women who are pregnant or planning to get pregnant, should abstain from drinking alcohol.

One in 100 births, that's approximately 3,000 babies born each year in Canada, is affected by prenatal exposure to alcohol. Drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause permanent birth defects and brain damage to a baby. Prenatal exposure to alcohol can also cause:

- Vision and hearing difficulties
- Bones, limbs and fingers that are not properly formed
- Damage to heart, kidney, liver and other organs
- Slow growth

Brain damage caused as a result of prenatal exposure to alcohol can result in learning disabilities, hyperactivity, difficulty paying attention, difficulty remembering, difficulty managing anger, poor judgment and difficulties with problem solving.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is the umbrella term used to describe the range of defects and disabilities that are caused by prenatal exposure to alcohol. But Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder doesn't only affect the baby and the baby's immediate family. It is a lifelong problem that affects all of us, everyday. FASD occurs in all cultures and levels of society. "Whether you are a parent raising a child with FASD, a teacher struggling with trying to reach a young student who is struggling with simple concepts, or a social services worker trying to offer assistance, we all have a price to pay for this costly and preventable condition," says Burgoyne.

In fact, a recent study by Dr. Brenda Stade, R.N. of St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto, estimates that the cost of FASD annually to Canada of those 1 to 21 years old, is \$344,208,000. "That dollar figure does not account for the emotional and psychological cost that the victims of FASD and their families have to pay every day," says Dr. Stade. The provincial awareness campaign will include advertising on transit systems across Ontario, including TTC subways and streetcars, in movie theatres and in shopping malls during May and June. Health care providers, community health groups and LCBO are supporting the campaign by distributing information about alcohol and pregnancy.

For more information on drinking and pregnancy, talk to your health care provider, or visit www.alcoholfreepregnancy.ca.

- 30 -

For more information, please contact: XXXXXXXX at XXX-XXX-XXXX.