



Statement

September 9, 2011

REPRESENTATIVE REFLECTS ON FASD AWARENESS DAY

Today is a day to reflect on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, an entirely preventable, invisible affliction that leaves those born with it facing life-long challenges and frequently living marginalized lives.

FASD is caused by mothers drinking alcohol during pregnancy. Health Canada estimates that approximately nine in every 1,000 infants are born with FASD. Brain damage can include problems with learning, memory, attention, problem solving, vision and hearing. Those with FASD may not understand social situations, and their behaviour can be seen as challenging.

A two-pronged approach is needed in order to prevent FASD and to support those living with the disorder.

Creating awareness of the danger of alcohol consumption during pregnancy is clearly the number one prevention tool. Schools and other community-based programs must continue efforts to ingrain in the minds of women of child-bearing age that there is no known safe time to drink alcohol during pregnancy. Family and friends also play a role in helping to prevent FASD.

Children with FASD need opportunities to grow and develop to their full potential. Diagnosing the problem early and ensuring children receive support in a healthy family situation gives a child the best opportunity to succeed in school and to prevent run-ins with the law, mental health or addictions problems. Without services or resources, children with FASD have little chance of success.

Our health, justice and social service delivery systems must recognize the depth and breadth of this problem and strive to develop innovative and compassionate ways to help those affected by FASD.

My hope is that by using FASD Awareness Day to reflect on the impact of this disorder, we will be reminded of our community responsibility to work towards preventing what can be prevented, and to support those who need our help.

Sincerely,

Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond
Representative for Children and Youth, British Columbia

Head Office #201 – 546 Yates Street P.O. Box 9207 Stn Prov Govt Victoria, BC V8W 9J1

T 250 356 6710 **T-F** 1 800 476 3933 **F** 250 356 0837 **E** rcy@rcybc.ca **www.rcybc.ca**