



Statement

September 09, 2009

REPRESENTATIVE MARKS FASD AWARENESS DAY

Nine is the critical number as we mark International FASD Awareness Day today. The ninth day of the ninth month is recognized around the globe to increase awareness of children born at a disadvantage because their mothers drank during pregnancy. Just nine months of alcohol avoidance during pregnancy gives a child an opportunity for a full and healthy life in which he or she can fulfill potential.

I feel passionately about this. As B.C.'s Representative for Children and Youth I see many situations in which a child's life outcome was shaped by a mother's alcohol consumption during pregnancy. Children born with FASD have obstacles – cognitive and behavioral -- from their first day. They will struggle in school, often lack healthy role models and all too frequently they will encounter the youth justice system

Through no fault of their own, children with FASD face life long challenges. Yet FASD is entirely preventable. In spite of our increasing knowledge about its effects, children continue to be born exposed to high amounts of alcohol. In some regions of B.C., particularly the North, there are record numbers of FASD diagnoses with consequences that affect individuals, families and society. The costs, both personal and financial, are tremendous.

With effective prevention strategies – starting with awareness through days like today – I am convinced that the cycle of sadness that alcohol inflicts on families and children can be reduced. Information and awareness of the danger of alcohol consumption during pregnancy needs to be constant, available and province-wide in B.C.

To give children with FASD a fighting chance, diagnoses and treatment options must be available. Without services and resources, children with FASD are marginalized and fall through society's cracks.

Turning our backs on the vulnerable carrying the massive burden of FASD affliction is not an option.

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