



Media Release

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Disability advocates SDSS and SACL call for value-free information for women who receive genetic testing

The Society for Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada (SOGC) recently recommended that genetic testing be offered to all pregnant women in Canada. These new guidelines do not include a recommendation that families receive accurate and balanced information about a disability determination in order to make the best decision for their family. The Saskatchewan Down Syndrome Society (SDSS) and the Saskatchewan Association for Community Living (SACL) share the concern that these recommendations could lead to the eventual elimination of citizens with Down syndrome.

SDSS and SACL would like to jointly call for the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan to commit to offering fair, accurate, balanced and value-free information to all Saskatchewan women who receive a determination of Down syndrome when they undergo genetic testing. Together we want to emphasize and celebrate the gifts and contributions of Saskatchewan citizens who have Down syndrome and all disabilities.

“In light of the recent announcement from the SOGC, our organization feels that we need to respond in order to provide citizens with a balanced viewpoint,” says Michelle Dueck, Chair of SDSS. “We believe that individuals with Down syndrome are an essential ingredient in the mosaic that makes up our human community and without them there would be a significant void in our society. The SDSS is willing to provide support to families who find out that their unborn child may have Down syndrome. Through our organization, families will be able to access resources and have the opportunity to meet parents who are raising children with Down syndrome. We would also like to encourage physicians to use neutral language that does not assume that parents would not want a child with a disability. People with Down syndrome are valued members of our community; they are people first and deserve to be welcomed into our world.”

Judy McLaughlin, President of SACL believes that the messages given by the medical community to prospective parents about Down syndrome do not always represent the reality: “In our organization, families have been told biased horror stories about life with a disability in order to persuade them to terminate a pregnancy when there is a Down syndrome determination. Parents deserve and are entitled to information that gives them the whole picture, including the rewards of parenting a child with Down syndrome. The messages they receive from doctors at such a vulnerable time are critical and should always be fair, balanced and supportive. For families who need support or information on this issue, SACL is here to provide linkages, resources and personal support.”

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