

TOGETHER WE CAN

Helping Kids Cope With Violence

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CANADIAN EXPERTS GATHER AT FIRST-EVER NATIONAL FORUM TO ADDRESS PARENT-FOCUSED SOLUTIONS TO VIOLENCE

Toronto, ON, June 26, 2002—Today, 21 Canadian experts are convening at a day-long working session with the single objective of helping parents respond to *all* forms of violence children encounter in their daily lives from the home, school and community to media and the Internet. Hosted by Family Service Canada (FSC) and the Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD) and sponsored by Nestlé Canada, the *Together We Can Forum* aims to be a catalyst and spark experts' best thinking on concrete ways parents can help their children cope with violence.

"The feedback we have been receiving from parents across the country about this issue has been overwhelming," said Margaret Fietz, President and CEO, Family Service Canada. "Parents feel there is a lot of useful information directed at children to help them understand the issue of violence, but there aren't a lot of resources available to help parents assist in the process with their children."

Results of the *Nestlé Together We Can Report* are being presented for the first time to facilitate discussion among the key stakeholders. The report, consisting of a national poll, numerous focus groups, and a literature review, probed parents' beliefs about how often their children are exposed to violence; what forms of violence they are most concerned about; and, the degree of impact they believe violence will have on their children's well-being.

The report, co-authored by the CCSD and FSC, indicates that parents are primarily concerned about their children's exposure to violence in school and in the media. Some parents are also concerned this exposure will have a negative impact on their children's well-being.

"The degree and nature of concern expressed by parents may provide experts with a better understanding of the issue and how to develop solutions," said Marcel Lauzière, President of the Canadian Council on Social Development. "For example, while more than eight in 10 parents express some concern about their children's exposure to violence in school and in the media, a smaller percentage of parents, 37 per cent and 43 per cent respectively, report being worried or very worried about violence in these two areas."

Dr. Debra Pepler, Director of The LaMarsh Center for Research on Violence and Conflict Resolution at York University, and Forum participant, believes that the day-long working sessions fill an important need: "Given the many forms of violence children are exposed to, they need us as *parents* to provide support and teach them what are acceptable and constructive ways to respond to violence."

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A key concern for many Forum participants is that some parents believe aggression and violence are a “natural” part of growing up and that this has tempered their concern for their children. According to Pepler, “many parents think that when it comes to dealing with aggression and solving conflicts, children should be left to fight their own battles and solve their own problems. But, what we know is, children can’t, and that’s what the *Together We Can Forum* is all about.”

Not only is the Forum groundbreaking in its subject matter, but it also represents a unique union of partners from the non-profit, research, and corporate sectors. Ed Marra, President and CEO of Nestlé Canada is particularly enthusiastic about the partnership. “As a parent myself, I’m deeply concerned about helping our children make sense of their exposure to violence,” said Marra who kicked-off today’s discussion. “Our vision is for parents across Canada to have better awareness and access to resources that will help their children. Together, working in collaboration with key experts and partners, we can make an important difference in the lives of children.”

Family Service Canada is a not-for-profit, national voluntary organization representing the concerns of families and family-serving agencies across Canada. Founded in 1982, Family Service Canada's mission is "Strong Families in a Caring Society".

The Canadian Council for Social Development is a national non-profit organization that provides high quality statistical and qualitative research in an effort to promote better social and economic security for Canadians.

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