

## **Children's Aid Societies and schools across the province DRESS PURPLE on October 24 to support Child Abuse Prevention Month**

Toronto – On Tuesday October 24, the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS), Children's Aid Societies (CAS), and key partners will mark Child Abuse Prevention Month (CAPM) with a provincial DRESS PURPLE DAY to raise awareness about how it takes a community to prevent child abuse. The provincial hashtag for the campaign is #IBREAKthesilence.

This year, hundreds of schools across the province will be using specialized classroom resources developed by OACAS to support teachers to engage in conversations about safety and well-being with students from JK to Grade 5. The resources are also intended to support schools in their participation in DRESS PURPLE DAY.

"A teacher may be the only 'helping' adult that a child encounters on a daily basis," Mary Ballantyne, CEO of the OACAS said. "This vital link between teachers and a child who may be abused or neglected means that they are one of our most important partners in keeping children safe."

The OACAS classroom resources are built around the theme "It takes a village to keep kids safe." OACAS worked with Boost Child & Youth Advocacy Centre and Windsor-Essex Children's Aid Society to create the Dress Purple Classroom Resources, which have been developed to support key recommendations from the Inquests into the tragic deaths of Jeffrey Baldwin and Katelynn Sampson. Inquest recommendations included the need to develop age appropriate curriculum for students about child abuse and neglect, and to support collaborative projects between CASs and Boards of Education.

"Schools have a unique window into the lives of children and youth, and so play an important role in keeping children safe," Mary Ballantyne, CEO of the OACAS, said.

Ontario's 48 CASs are an essential part of the provincial safety net for children, but they rely heavily on professional and public referrals to do their work. Schools are one of the leading sources for child protection referrals made to CASs.

"Speaking up and sharing the message that child abuse and neglect can be prevented, and that help is available, is an important message for all of us to share – not just today, but every day," Honourable Michael Coteau, Minister of Children and Youth Services and Minister Responsible for Anti-Racism said. "We all have a duty and responsibility to our next generation, and ensuring they are supported to reach their best and full potential."

We are also excited to have the CN Tower, a provincial landmark, light up in purple on the evening of October 23rd to usher in DRESS PURPLE DAY. The CN Tower will be lit in purple from sunset on the 23rd to sunrise the next day, in addition to the standard light show.

For more information about DRESS PURPLE DAY or to arrange interviews, please contact:

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**About the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies:** Since 1912, OACAS has represented Ontario's Children's Aid Societies in Ontario and provided service in the areas of government relations, communications, information management, education and training to advocate for the protection and well-being of children.

<http://www.oacas.org>.