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Harper Government announces new research chair dedicated to autism treatment and care

Innovative research program to focus on mental health challenges facing Canadians with autism spectrum disorders

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Toronto, Ontario (November 5, 2012) – On behalf of the Honourable Leona Aglukkaq, Minister of Health, Parliamentary Secretary Dr. Colin Carrie, today announced a new research chair whose work will aim to improve the treatment and care of Canadians with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) throughout their lives. PS Carrie was joined by Mike Lake, Member of Parliament for Edmonton – Mill Woods – Beaumont. The chair is funded by the Harper Government in partnership with Autism Speaks Canada, the Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorders Alliance, NeuroDevNet, and the Sinneave Family Foundation.

"Our Government is committed to helping Canadians maintain and improve their health," said PS Carrie. "That's why we are supporting research that will use innovative approaches to improve the health of Canadians who live with autism."

"Our Government understands the importance of working with organizations in the autism community and the role of the new research chair," added MP Lake. "These organizations provide a valuable link to Canadians affected by ASD and their families and they will be critically important to the success of the research program and implementation of the results."

Dr. Jonathan Weiss at York University is the recipient of the new Chair in Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) Treatment and Care Research Program. He and his team will examine why people with ASD are prone to develop mental health problems, evaluate novel treatment strategies to help youth and adults with ASD deal with these issues, as well as other stressful events like bullying, and find ways to improve access to care for all. To achieve these goals, they will work with people with autism, families, service providers, and government to share cutting edge research that will inform mental health care policy and practice across the country.

"The majority of people with autism will experience mental health problems at some point in their lives. Good mental health translates into better outcomes for these individuals and for their families, and to a reduced demand on our health and social systems, which benefits all Canadians," said Dr. Weiss. "Thanks to the support from CIHR and its partners, we look forward to conducting research that addresses this need."

"Individuals with ASD transitioning from the protection of the family and pediatric health and educational services face a huge gap in the continuum of care, and access to meaningful supports," says Dr. Dan Goldowitz, Scientific Director of NeuroDevNet. "NeuroDevNet is delighted to partner in supporting the work of Dr. Weiss because his research addresses these fundamental issues in a thoughtful and applied manner."

The Harper Government and its partners have committed \$1M over five years to support the Chair. York University has also committed matching funds to the research chair announced today, along with its community partner, the Spectrum of Hope Autism Foundation. CIHR encourages institutions to collaborate in the support of the best health research in Canada.

"On behalf of York University, I would like to congratulate Dr. Weiss on being named the recipient of the new Chair in Autism Spectrum Disorders Treatment and Care Research Program," said Mamdouh Shoukri, President and Vice-Chancellor. "York's Faculty of Health is home to some of Canada's leading researchers, who work collaboratively to improve health promotion, disease prevention and health care in the community. I am proud of their commitment to bettering the health of the nation."

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Further information:

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