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## Incontinence Coalition calls on government leaders to help de-stigmatize the condition and improve access to care

**Toronto, ON (April 20, 2009)** –Members of The Incontinence Coalition endorsed a letter to Federal and Provincial Ministers of Health urging greater recognition of the prevalent and chronic condition of incontinence. Incontinence affects more than 3 million Canadians and is a chronic condition that carries an enormous stigma.

The newly formed Incontinence Coalition is made up of respected and well-known organizations that represent the voice of many Canadians affected by the condition. These groups include the Canadian Continenence Foundation, Canadian Obesity Network, Canadian Paraplegic Association (Ontario), Canadian Prostate Cancer Network, CARP, Easter Seals Canada and the Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus Association of Ontario.

“Incontinence can impact all parts of a person’s life: their social interactions, their sex life, their ability to work, travel, play sports, and participate in community life” stated Jacqueline Cahill, Executive Director of the Canadian Continenence Foundation. “It can be an emotionally devastating condition that causes social isolation, low self-esteem, depression, and a fear of intimacy.”

“Canadians living with incontinence usually endure the condition in silence because of the stigma attached. Many are too embarrassed to seek treatment,” said Derek Lawrence, Director of the Canadian Prostate Cancer Network.

To help de-stigmatize the condition and improve access to care, the Incontinence Coalition encouraged Federal and Provincial Ministers of Health to:

- **Publicly Acknowledge the Condition.** There is a need to publicly acknowledge the prevalence of the condition and the need for treatment. This will help normalize and de-stigmatize the condition.
- **Improve public education and awareness.** There is a need for the government to take a pro-active role in promoting awareness and education of this condition to the public.
- **Improve access to treatments,** including medications; absorbent products (for community dwelling individuals and those in Long Term Care facilities); surgical treatments and catheters.
- **Increase the emphasis on incontinence education for general practitioners.** GPs must become more knowledgeable and proactively bring up the subject with their older patients.
- **Ensure access to trained nurses and other supportive care-givers.** Nurses and nurse practitioners who are trained in continence care are needed to help provide support for those individuals living with incontinence in the community and their caregivers.
- **Fund Continence Care Clinics** These clinics will provide assessment, management, education and referral for people living with incontinence.

“It is important for the Government to publicly acknowledge the prevalence of incontinence and the need for treatment,” stated Holly Vengroff, Vice President at CARP.

Members of the public are encouraged to contact their MPs to voice their support for the Coalition and its recommendations.



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