

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New Strategy and National Campaign to Cut Disastrous Annual Injury Toll: 13,600 deaths, 60,000 permanent disabilities, 3 million hospital visits

Wednesday, October 7, 2009 – Halifax NS – A new national campaign is being launched that will challenge Canadians to *Be Visible* in their day-to-day activities to promote the health and well-being of their co-workers, friends, neighbours and families. One key element of the new strategy is a program *Be Visible – Be Certified*. The campaign is being announced as part of the 3rd Annual Safe Communities Day being celebrated across the country today.

This collaborative strategy will challenge Canadians to mobilize to fully address the devastating toll of personal injury on people of all ages from all walks of life, as well as the burden of preventable suffering inflicted on our economy and quality of life as a nation by:

- heightening the awareness of the devastating impact of personal injury in Canada,
- introduce new injury reduction strategies and
- significantly increase the number of Canadians, particularly young people, to become certified in first aid and CPR training.

Personal injury in Canada is one of the most serious public health issues facing our country. The most recent report on the *Economic Burden of Injury* by SmartRisk shows that over 13,600 people died as a result of an injury, over 211,000 were hospitalized and the total cost of injury in Canada was close to \$20 billion in 2004. The launch of *Be Visible* is a response for Canadians from all walks of life to address this serious problem.

“To put personal injury into context, every 10 seconds in Canada, someone enters a hospital as a result of an injury” Paul Kells, President of Safe Communities Canada said. “An hour and 340 people later, 22 will be admitted, 1 person will die, 7 will carry a disability for the rest of their lives and of those 7, an hour later, 1 will be diagnosed as totally disabled. What really matters is that we can stop most of this.”

“Today, I am honoured to be joined by my colleagues, Ms Pamela Fuselli, Executive Director of Safe Kids Canada, Mr. Bob Baker, President and CEO of SmartRisk, Ms Rebecca Nesdale-Tucker, Executive Director of ThinkFirst Canada and Mr. Conrad Sauv , Secretary General and CEO of Canadian Red Cross to formally launch *Be Visible* here in Halifax.” Kells said. “Through this new national collaborative effort, we commit to be at the forefront across the country, and through our own respective networks, to make fundamental change and we ask all Canadians to join us in our effort to reduce personal injury.”

In communities right across the country, various events are being held to increase awareness of community safety and injury reduction initiatives. As well, Ambassadors for Safety are being recognized for their contribution within their own communities who are already demonstrating leadership and truly are making a difference by being visible within their respective communities.

“As we celebrate Safe Communities Day, there are thousands of volunteers across the country introducing ways for us to be visible. In Kamloops British Columbia there is an age-friendly fall prevention session happening, in Red Deer Alberta and Kenora Ontario local schools and businesses are wearing various items encouraging others to be visible, in Wood Buffalo Alberta and Rainy River Ontario, local school children are being asked to assess how safe the routes they take to school and photographing risks they come across.” Kells said. “It does not take much from any of us to make a huge difference in the lives of our parents, our kids or our friends and neighbours, and Canadians should think about this.”

One of the most significant ways to reduce injury, while at the same time contributing the well-being of communities, is to become certified in first aid and CPR. Training can reduce the chance of injury by 40%. Overall, injuries on streets, playgrounds, arenas and in homes - everywhere - are 8 to 11 times greater in number than injuries at work across Canada. The impact of today's announcement will reduce health care costs and hospital admissions, reduce pain, suffering and death and improve national productivity for time lost at work because of *off the job* injuries, which cost the country far more than on the job injury.

"Every day we see examples of people using first aid and CPR skills to prevent or treat an injury, or even to save a life," says Conrad Sauvé, Secretary General and CEO of the Canadian Red Cross. "In just the last year, the Red Cross has empowered close to half a million Canadians with these skills and the confidence to use them, and we are committed as a partner in the Be Visible campaign to train even more and do our part to further prevent and reduce injuries and save lives coast to coast."

"The drive to significantly increase the number of Canadians certified in first aid and CPR is being led for the most part by young people across the country" Kells said. "Sir John A. Macdonald High School here in Halifax is home to Canada's first Be Visible - Be Certified Student First Aid Response Team and will be followed in Bay of Quinte Safe Communities Ontario where the program will be introduced in 10 high schools, Cranbrook Safe Communities in British Columbia aims to train over 50 students at Mount Baker Secondary School, who will then promote training to each class in the school and in Prince Albert Saskatchewan the local safe community will be training employees, their families and students over the course of the year. In Thompson Manitoba, they hope to train every graduating student from R.D. Parker Collegiate by the end of the school year. Canada's young people are at the forefront of a huge cultural change that will make a difference in thousands of neighbourhoods, schools, workplace and homes for years to come."

Safe Communities Canada is a national charitable organization dedicated to helping communities build the capacity and resources they will need as they commit to coordinated, thoughtful and strategic community-focused and community-driven initiatives to reduce the risk of injury in order to make Canada the safest country in the world to live, learn, work and play. There are 44 active Safe Communities across Canada in 7 provinces and 1 territory representing close to 25% of the Canadian population.

To learn more about the be Visible campaign and Be Visible – Be Certified, please visit www.be-visible.ca

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