

November 17, 2020

With regard to the ongoing trial of Mr. Alek Minassian, who struck 26 pedestrians killing 10 on a Toronto street 2 years ago, Autism Canada wishes to publicly denounce the egregious claims made by Defence Counsel Psychiatrists who attribute the accused's actions to "his autistic way of thinking (sic. being) severely distorted similar to psychosis."

"There is no psychosis in ASD and no tendency to anti-social behaviour any more than in the general population. I think you would not get any serious objection from the academic community on that account." said Dr. Peter Szatmari, Chief, Child and Youth Mental Health Collaborative CAMH.

Autism Canada wishes to respond emphatically that these claims are wholly unsubstantiated, merely speculative, and made carelessly without any published evidence proving autism, on its own, is a risk factor for becoming violent against other people¹. In fact, when researchers consider other psychiatric disorders as a risk factor for violence, in particular ADHD and Conduct Disorder, any association with autism is NOT statistically significant. Notably, the presence of autism among individuals diagnosed with ADHD or Conduct Disorder tended to reduce the risk of violent crime².

Autism Canada Board Chair Dermot Cleary "in the event that Dr Westphall's written report for the Defence is entered into evidence, we will make an application to obtain a copy and will provide a more precise response at that time. We ask that all parties be mindful of the potential for unwarranted and negative perceptions which can impact on over half a million Canadians living with ASD".

¹Heeramun R, Magnusson C, Gumpert C, Granath S, Lundberg M, Dalman C et al. Autism and convictions for violent crimes: population-based cohort study in Sweden. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*. 2017 Jun;56(6):491-497.e2.

²The Link Between Autism and Violence Isn't Autism: ADHD and Conduct Disorder explain associations between autism and violent crime. *Psychology Today* May 8, 2017; by David Rettew, MD

About Autism Canada:

Autism Canada, an Imagine Canada accredited organization, is the only Canadian organization with a national perspective on the issues currently facing those with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Our history is rich in education, advocacy, support and an unwavering dedication to improving the lives of those living with autism spectrum disorder, their families and caregivers. Seeing the Spectrum Differently since 1976.

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