



CMA Honours the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario for Excellence in Health Promotion

Ottawa, August 12, 2009– The Canadian Medical Association (CMA) announced today that the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario had received its Award for Excellence in Health Promotion. The award recognizes individuals and organizations from outside of the health sector who have made a significant contribution toward a healthy population and a healthy community.

“The CMA’s vision of a healthy population can only be achieved through the actions of all Canadians,” said CMA President Dr. Robert Ouellet. “We are therefore delighted to present the 2009 Award for Excellence in Health Promotion to this dynamic provincial organization whose contribution to developing healthy self esteem and body image in all children has made a difference in elementary schools across the province of Ontario.”

“The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario is deeply honoured that the Canadian Medical Association has chosen the ETFO Body Image Project as this year’s recipient of the Award for Excellence in Health Promotion,” said ETFO President David Clegg. “On behalf of our 73,000 members, I would like to sincerely thank the CMA for this prestigious award.”

The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario has created a school-wide strategy to help young children develop healthy, positive attitudes toward body image and self-esteem. *Reflections of Me: Body Image and Self-Esteem* is a preventative educational program that teaches critical thinking and helps children engage in healthy and productive choices in their lives.

The *Reflections of Me* resource includes a set of lesson plans for students from kindergarten to grade 8 that reinforce healthy attitudes, acceptance and resiliency in young students. The resource is integrated into the regular program and teaches students to accept diverse bodies, to promote body acceptance, resistance to harassment associated with body image and to question social adherence to body norms.

Research indicates that attitudes toward one’s body begin to develop at age four or five. The effects of negative body image and self-esteem are far-reaching and cause recurring problems for students, often resulting in them withdrawing from social networks and doing poorly in academic subjects and physical education – the very activities that could strengthen their self-esteem and provide supportive environments.

The *Reflections of Me* program is an evidence-based, preventative approach to a serious issue. It encourages self-awareness and acceptance of differences while building on other anti-bullying programs. The program also encourages parents to use the same inclusive and supportive language to strengthen children's healthy self-esteem and body image development.

"As federation of educators, we believe strongly in the importance of advocating on behalf of our students," said Clegg. "If young children can learn to accept themselves and others, we can hopefully help eliminate the bullying and stereotyping that we see in schools and in society."

This nomination was strongly supported by the National Eating Disorder Information Centre of Canada, the Canadian Teachers' Federation, and the Media Awareness Network.

The CMA Award for Excellence in Health Promotion will be presented in Toronto on Aug. 19th at the Sheraton Center during the Federation's annual meeting.

The CMA's Award for Excellence in Health Promotion was introduced in 2003. For consideration for this award, nominees must have contributed to the improvement of health through health promotion actions, initiatives or increased public awareness. Additional information on the CMA Award for Excellence in Health Promotion including nomination forms can be found at www.cma.ca/healthaward.htm

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