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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

NEWS RELEASE

Non-invasive prenatal testing and Down syndrome

Calgary, Alta. - As non-invasive prenatal testing and screening (NIPT) options become more accessible in Canada, the Canadian Down Syndrome Society (CDSS) notes that NIPT for the purpose of identifying Down syndrome and other disabilities is accompanied by numerous ethical concerns.

CDSS is a strong advocate for fair, balanced information. With the increase in both the accessibility and popularity of NIPT, informed decisions are crucial. Prior to presenting families with the choice to undergo screening or testing physicians providing obstetric care have a responsibility to ensure that families receive unbiased, accurate, current and value-neutral information regarding Down syndrome

In a recent article by the Globe and Mail Tim Caulfield says, "The NIPT market is moving very, very quickly and the interest is high." This causes CDSS great concern as we know from our experience as a national organization that families are receiving limited and inaccurate information.

CDSS believes that the use of genetic screening for the purpose of identification and termination of fetuses with Down syndrome may adversely affect the quality of life for all persons with Down syndrome. This screening threatens the diversity and vitality that people with Down syndrome and other disabilities currently contribute to many Canadian communities. Currently there are 45,000 Canadians with Down syndrome. These individuals are valued and participating members in their communities across the country. People with Down syndrome are attending their community schools, graduating from high school, receiving post-secondary education, obtaining meaningful employment and getting married.

We advocate that the primary goal of NIPT should not be to reduce prevalence of Down syndrome in the population, but rather to provide opportunities to improve prenatal and delivery care for the family.

About Canadian Down Syndrome Society:

The Canadian Down Syndrome Society (CDSS) is a vital resource linking individuals, parents and professionals through advocacy, education, and providing information. CDSS is proud to be the voice of Canadians with Down syndrome and their families. CDSS wants all Canadians to 'See the Ability'. Visit www.cdss.ca for more information.

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