



From: **AUTISM SPEAKS CANADA**
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AUTISM SPEAKS CANADA USHERS IN AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH WITH A SERIES OF AWARENESS AND FUNDRAISING INITIATIVES

**CN Tower among iconic buildings around the world participating in Light It Up Blue campaign
for U.N. sanctioned World Autism Awareness Day.**

MLSE Team Up Foundation partners on Raptors and Leafs Awareness Nights.

Toronto, ON. (March 31, 2010) – Autism Speaks Canada, today announced a series of awareness and fundraising initiatives involving a range of corporate and philanthropic partners that will take place throughout Autism Awareness Month in April.

“We are very fortunate to have this remarkable group of partners who share our passion for making life better for individuals with autism and their families,” said Suzanne Lanthier, Executive Director of Autism Speaks Canada. “Our thanks go to the leadership of these organizations, but also to their employees, who invest so much time and bring tremendous enthusiasm to the cause of autism awareness.”

Autism Speaks Canada is partnering with **Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment’s (MLSE) Team Up Foundation** with an Autism Awareness Night with the Toronto Raptors on March 31 and the Toronto Maple Leafs on April 1. “With autism affecting 1 in 110 children, it is our hope that awareness nights like these will help change the future for all children living with autism. At the Team Up Foundation, we give to improve the lives of youth. We believe lending a hand to raise awareness and funds for children living with autism will help create a world where all children will have the same opportunities to learn and grow,” states Heidi Spannauer, interim Executive Director of MLSE Team Up Foundation.

On April 1, to commemorate the 3rd United Nations-sanctioned World Autism Awareness Day, the **MaRS Centre** in Toronto, which houses the genetics research lab of Dr. Stephen Scherer, Senior Scientist, The Hospital for Sick Children, will join the **CN Tower**, the **Empire State Building** and other iconic landmarks around the world and will ‘lighting it up blue’. Other Canadian buildings joining this campaign include **Calgary City Hall and Municipal Building** and **Edmonton City Hall**.

With financial support from the **KRG Children’s Charitable Foundation**, a multi-page special information supplement on autism will appear in the April 1 issue of the Globe and Mail.

The 2010 **Toys“R”Us** fundraising campaign to benefit Autism Speaks Canada launched on February 28 and continues through Friday, April 30. Throughout the nine-week effort, donations will be collected in all Toys“R”Us and Babies“R”Us stores across Canada, as well as online at toysrus.ca.

Donations are also being collected during this time at Toys“R”Us and Babies“R”Us stores across the United States. Since the partnership launched in 2007, Toys“R”Us, Inc., the Toys“R”Us Children's Fund and customer contributions have combined to provide Autism Speaks with more than \$5.5 million.

In addition to the fundraising campaign, Toys“R”Us is kicking off its North American sponsorship of **Walk Now for Autism Speaks**, a year-long series of more than 80 walk events in communities throughout North America. All funds raised in Toys“R”Us and Babies“R”Us stores, online and through the *Walk Now for Autism Speaks* events will go directly to Autism Speaks Canada to support research and advocacy efforts.

Build-A-Bear Workshop and Autism Speaks are also teaming up for the sixth consecutive year. During the month of April, customers at its stores in the Canada and the United States will have the opportunity to make a donation to Autism Speaks at check-out. All stores will also offer customers printed information about autism.

About Autism

Autism is a complex neurobiological disorder that inhibits a person's ability to communicate and develop social relationships, and is often accompanied by behavioural challenges. Autism spectrum disorders are diagnosed in one in 110 children affecting four times as many boys as girls. The prevalence of autism increased 57 percent from 2002 to 2006. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have called autism a national public health crisis whose cause and cure remain unknown.

About Autism Speaks Canada

Autism Speaks Canada together with its founding organization in the United States forms North America's largest autism science and advocacy organization. Since its inception only five short years ago, Autism Speaks has made enormous strides, committing over \$142.5 million to global research and developing innovative new resources for families through 2014. The organization is dedicated to funding research into the causes, prevention, treatments and a cure for autism; increasing awareness of autism spectrum disorders; and advocating for the needs of individuals with autism and their families. In addition to funding research, Autism Speaks also supports the Autism Treatment Network, Autism Genetic Resource Exchange and several other scientific and clinical programs. Notable awareness initiatives include the establishment of the annual United Nations-sanctioned World Autism Awareness Day on April 2. Each year *Walk Now for Autism Speaks* events are held in more than 80 cities across North America.

To learn more about Autism Speaks Canada, please visit www.autismspeaks.ca.

For more information on World Autism Awareness Day and the Light It Up Blue campaign, please visit <http://worldautismawarenessday.org> and <http://lightitupblue.org>

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