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Attention News/Health Editors:
Diabetes burden challenging Ontarians, poll suggests

TORONTO, Feb. 6 /CNW/ - Matthew Stimpson wasn't aware of the financial burden of living with diabetes in Ontario when he and his family emigrated from England in 2003. According to a survey conducted by SES Research for the Canadian Diabetes Association, 71 per cent of Ontarians believe the long-term savings of government paying up front for the cost of medications, devices and supplies is justified because of the longer-term savings that would result from better management of the disease.

Today the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care created 44 new diabetes teams across the province to help support people with diabetes. This is a positive step and an accomplishment to be applauded because increased access to health-care providers, like Diabetes Educators, whose specialty is teaching self-management and providing care, empowers Ontarians living with the disease to learn and develop the skills required to reduce their risk of complications.

However financial costs and access to medication continues to be a burden weighing down good management strategies for Ontarians with diabetes. According to the survey, 63 per cent did not know that Ontarians living with diabetes have to pay for their own medications.

"It wasn't explained to me that I would have to pay out-of-pocket for medical supplies to manage my diabetes," says Matthew, a resident of Peterborough, Ontario, who lives with type 1 diabetes. "I also had no idea that it would be so costly, especially for me because I'm self-employed and don't have a medical benefits plan."

"It is critical that people with diabetes are supported to manage their disease appropriately, to avoid serious and costly complications, such as heart attacks, strokes or kidney failure," says Karen Philp, Executive Director, Public Policy and Government Relations, Canadian Diabetes Association. "Access to medication should not be a roadblock in the path to effective diabetes management."

Over 800,000 Ontarians are affected by diabetes and this number is expected to grow to 1.5 million by 2016. The survey found that 50 per cent of Ontarians know someone with diabetes. More than half of Ontarians with type 2 diabetes are not at recommended blood glucose levels and are therefore at high risk for complications.

The SES Research Survey was conducted on Ontario adults between January 18 and 23, 2007 to assess perceptions on issues related to diabetes. The margin of accuracy is 4.4 percentage points, plus or minus, 19 times out of 20.

The Canadian Diabetes Association works to prevent diabetes and improve the quality of life for those affected, through research, education, service and advocacy. The Association's strong network of assistance includes volunteers, employees, healthcare professionals and partners in 150 communities.

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