

## Speaking notes for CASLPA Press Conference December 10, 2007

- Good morning. My name is Dr. Linda Rammage and I am here as President of the Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists, also known as CASLPA.
- CASLPA is here today to encourage the government to revise the legislation pertaining to toy safety to ensure the health of our children's hearing.
- The Prime Minister addressed toy safety in his Speech from the Throne earlier this fall. The Government has promised to introduce measures on product safety and CASLPA would like to ensure that noise levels in toys are included in the assessment when legislation is being revised.
- There are many concerns that need to be considered by Health Canada when it comes to toy safety. The dangerous effect of noisy toys on hearing health is one of the important issues.
- As audiologists and speech-language pathologists, we are concerned that some noisy toys have the potential to harm hearing, which can lead to serious communication and learning difficulties in the future.

- In Canada, a regulation exists under the Hazardous Products Act which bans toys emitting noise levels exceeding 100 decibels (dB).
- While we support Health Canada's efforts to protect our children's hearing, audiologists have found that this noise level is too high and may be harmful. Noise induced hearing loss is permanent but preventable... The 100 dB level needs to be re-examined and a lower level should be set as the standard.
- The Hazardous Products Act does not take into account the typical use of toys. It considers only noise levels that are measured at a specified distance from a child's ear, assuming this is how they would "ordinarily" be used. However, we know that children often hold their toys much closer to the ear than the distance specified in the current law's measurement protocol.
- The International Standards Organization (ISO) states that all toys except close-to-the-ear toys shall not exceed 85 dB. (2005)
- Field tests conducted for a 2004 study by Option Consommateurs revealed that the majority of the toys

(53%) designed for the 0–3 age group were in fact held much closer to the ear than the distance specified in the current law’s measurement protocol.

- Noise levels are a crucial element to toy safety and the hearing health of our children.
- How loud is too loud? As a rule of thumb, if you have to raise your voice above the noise level of a toy to be heard, then the noise is too loud and could cause damage to your child’s hearing.
- For example, take this noisy toy that I am holding *{Pulls out toy and turns it on}*. Since I have to raise my voice to talk, this is a good example of a toy that is too noisy *{Said in a raised voice}*.
- A sound level meter tells us that the sound you just heard measured in at approximately 86 dB at arm’s length. However, if measured at close range to simulate when a young child brings a toy near his or her ear, the measurement reaches a peak of 106 dB! This is above the acceptable limit prescribed in the Hazardous Products Act.
- The holidays are just around the corner, and many of us - -- parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles are buying toys.

- In an effort to warn parents and consumers on the dangers that some noisy toys can cause, audiologists recommend the following safety tips:
  - Choose toys with an on/off button
  - Choose toys with a volume control
  - Limit playtime with noisy toys
  - Listen to the toy before making a purchase
  - Teach children the proper way to play with their toys
  - Purchase quiet toys such as puzzles and books that target language and literacy skills
  
- Of course, it is also important to consider that in our global economy, toys can come from anywhere, especially if purchased on the internet or during a trip in a foreign country, where noise standards may not exist.
  
- While we cannot control the standards on products that are purchased outside of Canada, our current legislation can be improved to ensure the hearing health of Canadian children at home.
  
- In addition, we encourage government to promote hearing health and safety tips for consumers buying toys from abroad.
  
- It is essential for parents to know that excessively noisy toys have the potential to harm their children's hearing if

they are not played with as intended or if children are playing with them for extended periods of time.

- To reemphasize, there are many issues to be considered by Health Canada when it comes to toy safety. We want noise to be one of the items for consideration and CASLPA would be pleased to assist Health Canada when this important piece of legislation is being revisited.

Thank you for listening to our message.

- ***Chantal introduces herself and repeats Linda's message in French.***