

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, November 17, 2020

Statement by Autism Ontario: Cultivated Misogyny and Sense of Entitlement Responsible, Not Autism

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Toronto, Ontario - November 17, 2020 -- Autism Ontario strongly objects to the defense team of Alek Minassian’s characterization of an “autistic way of thinking” similar to psychosis while on trial for the 2018 murders of Beutis Renuka Amarasinghe, Andrea Knafelc Bradden, Geraldine Brady, So He Chung, Anne Marie D’Amico, Mary Elizabeth Forsyth, Chul Min Kang, Ji Hun Kim, Munir Najjar, and Dorothy Sewell, and the attempted murder of 16 others.

Autism is a neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by social impairments and difficulty inferring the thoughts, feelings, and emotions of others. It is not characterized by violence or lack of a moral compass. Nor are autism and mental health synonymous. Too often, the broader underlying factors are ignored, which leads to unfortunate stereotyping. In reality, people on the autism spectrum and with other disabilities are much more likely to be victims of crime, rather than the perpetrators. The myth that autism causes criminal behaviour is exactly that: a myth.¹ Much too often when a person is diagnosed as autistic, their actions are examined exclusively through that lens without considering the broader picture of other influencing factors on the whole person. This is demeaning to everyone.

As a society, we need to move away from the social construction of autistic people and people with mental health issues as scapegoats for violent acts. Instead, we must focus on the proliferation of misogynistic and other supremacist ideas readily available for consumption and woven into our social fabric. These horrific crimes were actions driven by cultivated misogyny and a sense of entitlement, not by autism. Conflating what took place on April 23, 2018 with anything else obstructs our view of what needs to change.

For more information, email our media team at media@autismontario.com

About Autism Ontario: Autism Ontario has an over 47-year history of representing thousands of families and people on the autism spectrum across Ontario. We are the only organization in Ontario that has elected volunteer parent representation in all areas of the province through our 25 Chapters. We advocate with and on behalf of all people on the autism spectrum and their families – at all ages and stages of life, reflecting a wide range of expression and abilities. To connect with us, visit www.autismontario.com

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¹ Crane, Laura, Marasm Katie, Mulcahy, *Is Autism Linked to Criminality*, 2015, *Autism*
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1362361315583411>