

## Canadian parents have influence, but don't make the grade when it comes to having *The Talk* with their kids about science education

*New report finds that one-third of parents inaccurately think science education is mandatory through high school; almost two-thirds think it should be*

**LONDON, ON (November 10, 2015)** – Almost 90 per cent of Canadian parents believe they are the strongest influence when it comes making decisions about their children's education and post-secondary pathways, but they are not exerting that influence when it comes to science education. The results are part of the fourth Spotlight on Science Learning report released today by Let's Talk Science and made possible by Amgen Canada that takes an in-depth look at the shape of STEM – science, technology, engineering, math – learning landscape in Canada.

This year's report, *Exploring parental influence: shaping teen decisions regarding science education*, examines parents' beliefs and attitudes when it comes to influencing their child's academic and career choices.

Although 75 per cent of Canadian parents think that most or all jobs of the future will require at least a basic understanding of math and science, and believe STEM education is valuable, they are not having *the talk* with their kids when it comes to pursuing STEM education. Startlingly, only 28 per cent of parents polled said they often discuss the value of taking optional science courses in high school with their children. More surprisingly, one-third (31 per cent) of Canadian parents think that science is a mandatory academic requirement through high school, when in fact, there is no Canadian jurisdiction that requires a Grade 12 science course as a graduation requirement.

"It is encouraging to see that not only are parents influential when it comes to their children's education, they appreciate and value the skills that are learned by taking STEM courses," said Bonnie Schmidt, Ph.D., president and founder, Let's Talk Science. "It's clear, however, that parents are not having effective conversations with their kids about the importance of STEM education, and the doors it opens for future careers. That needs to change."

### Parental influence is high, but there is a gap

Canadian parents understand the importance of science education and believe that having a strong knowledge and understanding of science equips future generations with skills they need for a successful career. In fact, Canadian parents indicated that if they had the opportunity to spend extra money on their child's school, 46 per cent of parents polled said they would choose to spend the money to improve math and science education – the number one academic answer. Interestingly, when asked, well over half (64 per cent) of Canadian parents think science education should be mandatory until the end of high school (Grade 12) and want science education to take greater priority in school.

"Today, more than ever, jobs require the skills and tools, such as problem solving and critical thinking, that STEM teaches our youth," says Karen Burke, Ph.D., director, regulatory affairs,

Amgen Canada. “We need our youth to pursue STEM education to ensure their future job prospects as well as the country’s future prosperity.”

Canadian parents have significant influence on their children. It’s vital for parents to use that influence and have *the talk* with their children about the importance of STEM education. By offering support and encouragement about STEM education to their children, parents can help positively influence and shape their children’s academic choices, and future career opportunities.

Let’s Talk Science and Amgen Canada’s shared commitment to raising awareness of the importance of science education extends this year with the fourth *Spotlight on Science Learning* research report. It follows up on the findings of the 2014 *Spotlight on Science Learning* report that examined young Canadians’ attitudes and beliefs about STEM education and offered insight into how and when teens think about their future careers as they go through high school and make post-secondary choices.

For more information and to access the full report, please visit <http://www.letstalkscience.ca/spotlight>

### **About Let’s Talk Science**

Let’s Talk Science is an award-winning, national, charitable organization focused on education and outreach. Let’s Talk Science creates and delivers unique, accessible learning programs and services that engage children, youth and educators in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). The organization strives to prepare all youth for their future careers and roles as citizens in a world that is increasingly shaped by science and technology.

For more information about Let’s Talk Science, please visit [www.letstalkscience.ca](http://www.letstalkscience.ca).

### **About Amgen Canada**

As a leader in innovation, Amgen Canada understands the value of science. With main operations located in Mississauga, Ont.’s vibrant biomedical cluster, and its research facility in Burnaby, B.C., Amgen Canada has been an important contributor to advancements in science and innovation in Canada since 1991. The company contributes to the development of new therapies or new uses for existing medicines in partnership with many of Canada’s leading health-care, academic, research, government and patient organizations. To learn more about Amgen Canada, visit [www.amgen.ca](http://www.amgen.ca).

### **Survey Methodology**

From April 20th to April 21st, 2015 an online survey was conducted among 805 randomly selected Canadian adults who are parents of children aged 13 to 17 that will be enter grades 7 to 12 in the fall of 2015. All parents surveyed are Angus Reid Forum panelists. The sample was balanced on a 50/50 gender split and to regional data for the parents in proportion to the census. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding

For more information, please contact:

**Emily Vear**

Hill+Knowlton Strategies

[Emily.vear@hkstrategies.ca](mailto:Emily.vear@hkstrategies.ca)

416-413-4743