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**PRESS RELEASE**

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## **Court's Decision Leaves Autism Community Relieved**

The Ontario Autism Coalition is relieved that Alek Minassian has been found guilty for his crimes, and hopes that families impacted by the 2018 van attack will find at least a small sense of comfort from the verdict. We hope that this decision can now lift the dark cloud that has hung over this trial, with a firm rejection of the use of autism as a defence in this case.

Violent traits have no connection to autism; in fact, people on the autism spectrum are far more likely to be victims as opposed to perpetrators of violence. The court's decision makes it clear this was never a case of autism causing mass murder, but rather a case where someone who committed mass murder happened to have autism. An autism diagnosis does not predispose one to commit acts of violence.

Individuals with autism are our neighbours, coworkers, and friends. Today's verdict offers hope that our community can move forward despite the arguments of one defense attorney that autism is a valid defense for one of the most violent, abhorrent acts carried out against so many innocent people.

Angela Brandt, President of the Ontario Autism Coalition (OAC) mentions "there is nothing inherently violent about autism. Mentally healthy people, autistic or not, do not commit acts of violence. I hope Alek Minassian gets the help he requires".

Nothing about the actions of Minassian are representative of those with autism and the verdict today emphasizes the distance between Minassian's heinous acts and the autism community as a whole. Alek Minassian was an individual with autism who committed a crime. Other individuals with autism should not be measured by Minassian's actions.

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# **#AutismDoesntEndAt5**

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The Ontario Autism Coalition is a non-profit Ontario corporation dedicated to advocacy and political action on behalf of people with autism.

[www.ontarioautismcoalition.com](http://www.ontarioautismcoalition.com)