

## Autism Society Canada celebrates its 35th Anniversary in 2011 “A fight for healthcare – Vic’s story”

Vic Douse joined the Provincial Autism Committee and the Autism Society of PEI in 1999, and became president of the Autism Society of PEI in 2000. Vic is also on the board of Autism Society Canada, an organization that was started 35 years ago with the goal of helping parents find information and supports for their children living with an autism spectrum disorder.

Today, 35 years later – and with the help of board members like Vic - ASC has grown to become the largest collective voice in the Canadian autism community. Provincial and territorial autism societies such as Autism Society of PEI and their member groups provide direct support to people with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs) and their families all across Canada. As a board member, Vic sits alongside other parents who play an active role in aiding ASC to accomplish its mandate.

Vic and his wife Colleen have played a large role in the autism community of Prince Edward Island. In his role as president of Autism Society PEI, Vic has helped many Island families by fundraising to be able to arrange monthly guest speakers on autism related topics. Also, he has been a strong advocate for people with autism through his many presentations to various government ministers and departments. After their daughter Jewel—now eighteen, was diagnosed with an ASD in 1998 they visited two other families that had children diagnosed with Autism or ASD the year before. They did the research, brought ABA to the province and helped revitalize the Autism Society of Prince Edward Island.

For the last 10 years Prince Edward Island has pretended to implement new services by rewording and codifying policies, and renaming government departments. Recovery is not being tracked because there is precious little of it. In fairness, there has been additional staff hired, and waitlists have been reduced, but still recovery numbers are not where they could be. Vic says, “There is definitely a disconnect in Canada between what is needed and what is actually available.” The real issue says Vic, is that the government has ignored the numbers presented and has opted instead to label ASD a ‘mental health issue’. “There is no such thing as mental health. There is only health. You are healthy or you are not. Jewel deserves treatment for her Autism just as her grandfather received treatment for his polio and like any other sick child, with any other illness.” Despite winning a human rights complaint against the Provincial Government to stop illegally means testing, the partial funding his family receives over the year through the Disability Support Program is not enough. Vic is a true inspiration to many parents of children on the spectrum who continue to fight to get their children the resources they so desperately need. Vic urges parents to fight for what their children need. He says, “Don’t give up. Your children deserve more.”

Autism Society Canada supports Vic and his family by advocating on a national platform on their behalf. After 35 years of experience working with the Canadian autism community, ASC knows that the time is now to develop the foundation of a Canadian Autism Strategy, so individuals across Canada can access high quality services for their Autism related needs. For more information log on to [www.autismsocietycanada.ca](http://www.autismsocietycanada.ca), or contact us at **866-476-8440**.

ASC’s Provincial Member society in Prince Edward Island is Autism Society P.E.I.

<http://www.autismsociety.pe.ca> or 1.888.360.8687