

Federal Autism Legislation, Bill C-360, a “Step in the Right Direction”
Autism Society Canada hopes the introduction of Federal Autism legislation will pave the way for a *National Autism Strategy* in Canada

Ottawa - April 15th, 2009 – for immediate release - Autism Society Canada (ASC) applauds the introduction into the House of Commons of Bill C-360, An Act to amend the Canada Health Act (Autism Spectrum Disorder). In introducing the Bill, Sudbury M.P. Glenn Thibeault said: *“Yesterday was World Autism Awareness Day. I still wear my awareness pin proudly. We as parliamentarians need to work together to provide individuals with ASD and their families with the right supports.”*

Support for improving and augmenting services for persons with Autism is widespread. In separate letters acknowledging World Autism Awareness Day on April 2nd 2009, the Leaders of Canada’s federal Parties recognized the growing need to assist those affected by Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

The summary of the Act states that: *“The purpose of this enactment is to ensure that the cost of Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA) and Intensive Behavioural Intervention (IBI) for autistic persons is covered by the health care insurance plan of every province.”*

ASC encourages all within the Autism community to ask their Member of Parliament to support Bill C-360 which gives universal access to this scientifically validated and effective treatment. ASC also urges that work continue in order to provide other needed treatments and services in the best interests of all individuals with autism.

Christine Dade, President of Autism Society Canada, remarked: *“Providing Applied Behavioural Analysis and Intensive Behavioural Intervention in a timely and effective way for all those who need it is definitely a step in the right direction. It isn’t everything that is needed, however, and ASC strongly urges Canadians and their leaders to work towards a National Autism Strategy as well.”*

A National Autism Strategy, as called for in former Fredericton M.P. Andy Scott’s Private Members Motion M-172 (passed in the House of Commons over two years ago), includes:

- a.) the development, in cooperation with provincial-territorial governments, of evidence based standards for the diagnosis and treatment of autism spectrum disorder;
- b.) the development, in cooperation with provincial governments, of innovative funding methods for the care of those with autism spectrum disorder;
- c.) consulting with provincial-territorial governments and other stakeholders on the requirements of implementing a national surveillance program for autism spectrum disorder;
- d.) the provision of additional federal funding for health research into autism spectrum disorder.

Autism Society Canada looks forward to working with all stakeholders and the Government of Canada to develop a National Autism Strategy. Much more needs to be done to address the glaring gaps in services and supports across the lifespan of the individual with autism. The inherent Rights of all Canadians living with an ASD should be enhanced, protected and enforced by appropriate legislation in each province and territory.

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