



Autism Society Canada
Société canadienne de l'autisme

A Call for the Federal Government to Take Action on Autism Now

For immediate release

November 17, 2005 Ottawa – One year has passed since children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs) and their families were denied the support they were looking for at the Supreme Court of Canada in the *Auton* case. In this past year, there has been no action by the federal government to address the pressing and multifaceted needs of the autism community in Canada.

Early diagnosis, appropriate treatment, services and supports help people with ASDs reach their full potential as citizens, both at work and in our communities. “If our health, social service and education systems offered the necessary services to people with ASDs throughout their life, starting when they are young, indeed if we, as a society, made that early investment, we would not only be doing the right thing, we would also be opting for the most cost-effective solution,” said Jo-Lynn Fenton, president of Autism Society Canada. She added: “With the appropriate supports, accommodations and interventions, many of the people diagnosed with autism would not be dependent on the state their entire lives and the estimated two million dollars spent over just one dependent individual’s lifetime would be saved thousands of times over.” Health Minister Dosanjh’s recent announcement of \$300 million to promote health and disease prevention overlooked autism completely. This week, as the government prepares for an election, Finance Minister Goodale unveiled \$30 billion in spending and tax savings. The needs of the autism community were nowhere to be found in this spending spree.

In many parts of our country, treatment and other essential services for people with ASDs continue to be non-existent. Families are forced to relocate to another province or incur huge debt in order to obtain essential treatment. Unacceptable wait lists deprive children of scientifically validated early intervention treatment. Local, regional and national news media regularly report on individual cases that illustrate the lack of services for people with autism. It is shocking to read about a severely autistic 13-year-old boy being housed on the grounds of a provincial youth jail or a mother unable to get the hospital care she requires because there are no temporary care options for her son with autism. These are not isolated cases.

Autism Society Canada calls on the government to:

- Increase funding to provinces and territories to provide critical no-cost treatment, education, professional training, required supports and accommodations for Canadians with ASDs
- Mandate the Public Health Agency of Canada to make autism a national priority by initiating surveillance and reporting, and setting much-needed national standards for treatment and service delivery
- Allocate significant funds targeted for ASDs research to Canadian funding organizations such as CIHR
- Improve financial and other supports to people with disabilities and their families through the federal tax and labour systems

ASC is a federation of Canada-wide provincial and territorial autism societies whose collective memberships represent the largest body of individuals affected by ASDs and their families in Canada.

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