



Autism Society Canada
Société canadienne de l'autisme

Largest Collective Voice of the Autism Community in Canada Calls for Federal Leadership during Autism Awareness Month

For immediate release

September 28, 2005 Ottawa – On the eve of Autism Awareness Month, Autism Society Canada calls on the government of Canada to take a leadership role to address the growing autism crisis in Canada.

Autism Spectrum Disorder, also referred to as autism, is a neurological disorder that causes a developmental disability. It affects the way the brain functions, resulting in difficulties with communication and social interaction, unusual patterns of behaviour, activities and interests. Autism is more common than Down Syndrome, childhood cancer, cystic fibrosis, multiple sclerosis, blindness and deafness. Early diagnosis and appropriate services and supports help people with ASDs reach their full potential as participating members of their communities.

There are over 190,000 individuals with ASDs in Canada and it is estimated that one in every 200 children is born with an autism spectrum disorder. “During Autism Awareness Month, we encourage Canadians to learn more about this complex disorder. And, we call upon the federal government to design and implement an infrastructure and commit the resources **now** so the multi-faceted needs of our community can begin to be addressed,” said ASC President Peter Zwack.

“In Canada, we have a national Medicare system which should be providing accessible no-cost treatment. People with ASDs have the right to treatment and required services,” added Zwack. In some regions of Canada, treatment and other essential services for people with ASDs are non-existent. In other regions, unacceptable wait lists deprive children of scientifically validated early intervention treatment. In all regions of Canada, there are very few services and supports for adults with ASDs.

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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