



Autism Society Canada asks: Where is Canada's National Autism Strategy?

For immediate release

October 12, 2008, Ottawa - During Canadian Autism Awareness Month, Autism Society Canada calls on our federal leaders to reveal their plans for meeting the growing needs of the Canadian Autism Community

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), also referred to as autism, is a neurological disorder presenting many challenges across the lifespan of individuals. It affects the way the brain functions, resulting in difficulties with communication and social interaction, unusual patterns of behaviour, activities and interests. Early diagnosis and appropriate services and supports help people on the autism spectrum reach their full potential as participating members of their communities. It is estimated – and we can only estimate because there is no national surveillance mechanism in place – that there are over 200,000 persons affected by ASDs in Canada.

October is Canadian Autism Awareness Month in Canada. During October there are events taking place across the country to raise awareness and understanding of this complex disorder. Autism Society Canada has a comprehensive list of these events at its website. Christine Dade, ASC President, says “I strongly encourage everyone to participate in local awareness events in their provinces, fostering better understanding of the needs of the ASD community”.

While currently, there is some ongoing Canadian research on the causes of autism, accessing early diagnosis and appropriate intervention, services and supports is not a reality for Canadians. In a letter addressed to the major political parties, Autism Society Canada has asked each leader to explain their party's position on;

- increasing funding to provide critical treatment, education, professional training and required supports and accommodations for Canadians with ASDs
- setting national standards for treatment and service delivery
- increase targeted autism research in Canada
- a national surveillance and reporting system for Canada

Responses received from the parties can be found on the ASC website. www.autismsocietycanada.ca

In Canada we need to act now. Autism Society Canada calls on our leaders to make autism a national priority through increased funding for services, treatment and research.

Founded in 1976, Autism Society Canada has grown to become a strong 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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