

MEDIA RELEASE: Autism Society Manitoba and Asperger Manitoba Inc. For release August 13, 2008

Family relocates to Winnipeg to access services for their preschool child while hundreds of others must wait.

It is somewhat ironic that as the press highlighted the migration of a Nova Scotia family to Manitoba to access available early Applied Behaviourial Analysis (ABA) programs for their child, both Autism Society Manitoba and Asperger Manitoba Inc. are struggling to secure supports for children and adults across Manitoba for other equally necessary treatments and services.

The lifespan needs facing our community are complex and the treatment, service and accommodation needs of individuals who have Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) are multi-faceted. Unfortunately, that message does not seem to make a great story.

Both of our organizations sincerely welcome the availability of the ABA model of service for those families and children who find that it meets their needs. (Those families who cannot access the St. Amant service, or who are looking for different intervention models, are much less fortunate.)

But every day, ASM and AMI receive numerous requests for help from individuals and families across the province, many of whom are trying to deal with **glaring gaps in the availability of fully funded treatment, supports and services for ASD**. In far too many cases, Manitobans are unable to secure access to effective treatments, targeted health and social services, adequate education supports, and in-home family supports throughout their **lifespan**. ABA is only one approach. What about other needs which are just as urgent? These include:

- Adolescent and Adult services and supports including residential services, educational and employment supports
- More speech and OT professionals to work with individuals with ASD
- Other treatment options and opportunities to address educational/learning needs, behaviour issues, communication problems for those who do not choose or require the ABA program
- Treatments and supports for sensory, motor and physical challenges of autism
- Specialized medical services, pharmacological and biomedical assistance
- Social and self-help skills development programs
- Family supports including financial supports, respite, rural transportation services, etc

We must not forget the many "have-not" parts of our province that remain severely under-serviced when it comes to supports for individuals with Autism and Asperger Syndrome. An annual Autism conference normally held in Winnipeg is being held in The Pas, Manitoba this fall to accommodate our rural and northern families who for many reasons simply cannot to travel to Winnipeg. Asperger Manitoba Inc is holding its second annual conference in Winnipeg in October, and has already heard from many professionals and families across the province interested in registering for the two day event.

Both organizations are getting the message loud and clear that the need for advocacy and supports are **everywhere** in our province and under-servicing this sector of our population is taking a toll on the mental and physical health of our families. Provincial health and social policy leaders take note: We need a seamless system of care and a better understanding of the individual needs of children and adults with autism across the entire **lifespan**, and we look forward to continue working with you to improve this situation over the coming months.

Autism Society Manitoba is an incorporated non profit organization which was founded in 1976. ASM supports and advocates for all individuals, families and support networks regardless of their diagnosis, method of intervention choice or area of residence in Manitoba. Asperger Manitoba Inc., is an incorporated not for profit organization that grew out of a support group for parents of adults with Asperger Syndrome. AMI recognizes the need for increased awareness, understanding and ongoing supports specific to those living with AS in Manitoba.

Media Inquiries please contact: Autism Society Manitoba, Sandra McKay 223-9985

Asperger Manitoba Inc., Anne Kresta 487-2808