

Autism Society Canada responds to the Federal Government's 2009 Budget

On January 27, 2009, Autism Society Canada listened carefully, and was disappointed to hear that the Federal Budget did not include investment in ASD treatment, services and resources as a national priority.

On April 2, 2009, World Autism Awareness Day will be celebrated and the Federal Government has an **opportunity** to make a commitment to the Autism Community of Canada by supporting and endorsing a National Autism Strategy.

A first step:

This symbolic first step would build on the many years of behind-the-scenes work begun by numerous Autism Community Stakeholder Organizations. Autism Society Canada has been working for over thirty years to promote a comprehensive National Autism Strategy. We feel that national leadership and commitment on ASD is absolutely vital in order to bring equal access to targeted health, education and social services for all Canadians with ASDs. Much of the groundwork for this project is in place. What is missing is an endorsement and a commitment from the Federal Government that ASD related issues are indeed a national priority.

Already working:

Member ASC societies are already working with their provincial counterparts to draft comprehensive strategies which will support their provincial health care plans. Provincial governments already see the value in investing in early intervention for individuals with ASDs. (Oct.30/07 news release from Nova Scotia Department of Health "Autism Treatment Program Getting Positive Results" at: <http://www.gov.ns.ca/news/details.asp?id=20071030004>) But it is at the Federal level that national leadership and commitment is absolutely vital in order to bring equal access to targeted health, education and social services for all Canadians with ASDs.

Specific steps to achieve our goal:

Make Autism a National Priority: Health Canada can make autism a national priority by initiating a program of surveillance reporting and by setting national guidelines for treatment and service delivery.

- Canada needs a universal screening process and improved diagnosis provided by skilled professionals.
- Canada needs to address glaring gaps in the availability to treatments, services and accommodations because the lifespan needs facing our community are complex and multi-faceted.
- Canada must continue to foster research with an investment to fund targeted Autism Research.

Summary:

Today, the Federal Government has an opportunity to be part of the ASD solution. Much of the groundwork for this initiative is already underway. Along with Autism Stakeholders we **can** build a National Autism Strategy together, for the benefit of all Canadians.

For over 33 years, Autism Society Canada has been acting as 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. **Together we can do this.**

Christine Dade



President