



**Autism Society Canada**  
**Société canadienne de l'autisme**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**Autism Society Canada Intervenes in Auton Case at Supreme Court of Canada**

**Ottawa, Ontario, June 10, 2004**

Autism Society Canada (ASC) was granted leave to intervene in the Auton case heard by the Supreme Court of Canada June 9 & 10. ASC endorses the position brought forward by the families involved in this important case. The failure of the British Columbia government to fund treatment for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (autism or ASD) infringes their equality rights guaranteed under the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

Since 1976, ASC has been a federation of Canada-wide provincial and territorial autism societies whose collective memberships represent the largest body of people affected by ASD in Canada (families and individuals with autism). ASC supports the provision of accessible evidence-based effective treatments and required services. Research has shown that outcomes for children with autism can be significantly enhanced with the provision of such treatment. Through these measures, ASC is very hopeful for better outcomes for people affected by autism. As ASC's recently published *Canadian Autism Research Agenda and Canadian Autism Strategy: White Paper* shows, there is strong support from the Canadian autism research community for access to effective evidence-based treatments and supports for all people with ASD. Choice regarding treatment is paramount in ASC's endeavours. At present, choice is severely undermined and restricted by the lack of universally available effective treatment for all aspects of autism in Canada.

While ASC recognizes that governments must prioritize when allocating health care resources, this should not be arbitrary. Governments must ensure that benefits are provided in a non-discriminatory manner. Many Canadian families affected by ASD who have sought funding for effective treatment and required supports have encountered decision-making processes that are neither consistent nor transparent.

Based on information from three provincial departments of education regarding the number of students with ASD over the past six years, ASC estimates there are more than 100,000 Canadians living with autism, with over 3,000 new cases diagnosed each year. Under the current system of often ineffective, inappropriate, and inaccessible treatments and supports, the average lifetime cost per person with an autism condition is estimated by ASC to be at least \$2 million. Studies have shown average lifetime cost savings of up to 50 percent with accurate early diagnosis, effective treatment, and adequate required supports. Access to effective treatment and supports would result in enormous savings – in the billions of dollars – to taxpayers.

There are currently hundreds of families engaged in legal proceedings across Canada seeking access to effective ASD treatment for their family members. ASC is encouraged by the strong support accorded to *Charter* rights in decisions made to date. We are hopeful that Canada's highest court will support the requirement of provincial governments to provide scientifically validated effective treatment of ASDs. A just outcome in the Auton case will have a positive influence on a national basis for the Canadian community of individuals affected by ASDs and their families. Indeed, such a decision will benefit all Canadians.

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**To view ASC's Factum on this case,** go to [www.autismsocietycanada.ca](http://www.autismsocietycanada.ca) and follow the links.