



## ***Common Goals: An Open Letter from Autism Society Canada***

April 26, 2007

Autism Society Canada is a nationally incorporated charity founded in 1976 by the regional societies existing at that time. ASC is committed to advocacy, public education, information and referral, and the support of provincial and territorial autism societies. Over the last 30 years our mandate has remained constant: to work toward the necessary changes that will improve the quality of life of Canadians with Autism Spectrum Disorders across their lifespan. We would like to take this opportunity to update you on our activities.

The current ASC Board of Directors is committed to continuing our charitable efforts to increase awareness and understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorders and to inform and educate the public about the specific needs of the ASD community. Our Board is made up of dedicated individuals from across Canada. On the Board we have a member with an ASD diagnosis, a number of parents, an ASD researcher, and other professionals who collectively bring much experience to the organization. We are concerned about a broad array of Autism issues, and represent the concerns of individuals across this large country. At this time, ASC is in the process of hiring a new Executive Director to assist us in our future endeavours.

We are continuing to promote the current understanding of ASD issues, while respecting differences in choices for treatment and other issues. We remain committed to increasing the participation of people with ASD in the community at large as well as in our organization. In addition to our active board member who has an ASD, we have established an Advisory Committee of Individuals with ASD who submitted their first recommendations to the ASC Board this past November.

There are approximately 200,000 Canadians living with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD); this figure does not include the numerous family members and caregivers whose lives are affected by autism. It is estimated that one in every 165 children born today has an ASD. With more attention being focused on ASD issues at the federal, provincial and territorial levels and in the public eye, it is a critical time for the ASD community to pull together and work toward common goals.

Differences and divisions within the ASD Community with respect to approaches to achieving necessary treatments and services for people with ASD were very apparent during the Senate Committee hearings this past Fall. This is not surprising, given the complexity of the lifespan needs we are dealing with as well as the multi-faceted nature of the treatment, service and accommodation needs across the ASD spectrum. At ASC we are committed to working with all our partners and stakeholders nationally in order to come to a consensus regarding issues of concern, while respecting diversity. This is not a time for division, but a time for open discussion and a time to

build on the hard work of so many dedicated people and organizations involved in the ASD community.

All of us in the ASD Community – persons with ASD, parents and other family members, health care professionals, educators and researchers – know that autism has not yet found its rightful place in the health, education and social services systems. There is much work to be done to increase awareness and understanding of ASDs, and to promote responsive policies, necessary programs – in the areas of treatment, supports and accommodations – and legislation that will meet the diverse needs of the ASD community.

We look forward to continuing our work with our provincial and territorial members, with government, the ASD community, our other community partners and all our colleagues to help change the face of autism in Canada.



Christine Dade, President

On behalf of ASC's Board of Directors:

Michael Lewis, First Vice-President  
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