



Autism Society Canada Supports a National Autism Strategy

For immediate release

December 4, 2006 Ottawa – Autism Society Canada (ASC) is pleased that many of the Members of Parliament have recognized the pressing need to establish a national autism strategy. These MPs will be working together in the House this week trying to make this a reality. For many years ASC has called for a national autism strategy from the Government of Canada. A comprehensive strategy on autism would include the following elements:

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

Improve Screening and Diagnosis: Universal screening and improved diagnosis provided by professionals with specialized ASD diagnostic training for both children and adults should be made available in Canada. These must be provided by professionals with specialized ASD diagnostic training, for both children and adults.

Improve Access to Treatment: Universally accessible scientifically validated treatment regardless of age or ability to pay is essential. The federal government must work with its provincial and territorial counterparts, and increase funding to provide critical (no-cost) effective evidence-based treatment such as Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA) for as long as it is deemed necessary by an individual's professional team. Appropriate treatments, provided by trained professionals, to address educational/learning needs, behaviour issues, communication problems and/or motor and physical disabilities are vital. These may include, but are not limited to, behavioural intervention, social and self-help skills, speech and language therapy, physical or occupational therapy, specialized medical services and pharmacological assistance.

Improve Services and Supports: Targeted education services, professional training and social and health supports are needed for all Canadians with ASD across the lifespan. These include:

- supports to facilitate community inclusion such as teachers and aides with specialized autism education training; life skills programs; mental health services provided by professionals trained in ASD issues; career and vocational training; and assisted living support;
- supports for caregivers, including respite, family training and assistance, sibling supports, social services and long-term planning assistance;
- improved financial and vocational supports to individuals with disabilities and their families through the federal tax and labour systems.

Foster Research: Significant funding must be targeted for ASD research to Canadian funding organizations such as CIHR and Genome Canada. Research that provides individuals with ASD and their families with the practical support they need is key.

At ASC we sincerely hope that these potential new commitments at the federal level will encompass the elements of a truly comprehensive autism strategy and that they will initiate significant action to improve the lives of Canadians with ASDs and their families.

ASC is a federation of Canada-wide provincial and territorial autism societies whose collective memberships represent the largest body of individuals affected by ASD and their families in Canada.

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