



## **Autism Society Canada Celebrates World Autism Awareness Day with Call to Action**

### **For immediate release**

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On December 18, 2007, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 62/139 **World Autism Awareness Day**, by unanimous consent, encouraging UN Member States to take measures to raise world-wide awareness about autism and to promote early diagnosis, early intervention and necessary services for individuals with ASD and their families. **The resolution designates April 2<sup>nd</sup> as World Autism Awareness Day** - a UN Day to be observed every year starting in 2008.

Autism Society Canada (ASC) joins other organizations around the world in welcoming this opportunity to celebrate the unique strengths of our Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) community and to bring world attention to the critical and complex needs of individuals and families living with autism. ASC's President, Christine Dade applauds the UN for this important recognition and also pays tribute to our strong autism community in Canada...

*"...The ASD community in Canada includes thousands of diverse individuals with many unique abilities and talents - at Autism Society Canada we are very honoured to work with an Advisory Committee of Adults with ASDs from across the country who share their experience and advise our Board on adult needs and issues. We would also like to mark this special day by paying tribute to our provincial and territorial network of committed parents and family members living with autism who have developed truly exceptional skills, knowledge and perseverance while working to support their loved-ones in the face of so many barriers. Individuals with ASDs and their families are an inspiration to all Canadians".*

Incidence of autism is now as high as 1/150 with rates appearing to be increasing across the globe. Based on data collected from North America, Western Europe and Japan, it is conservatively estimated that 35 million people worldwide have autism. ASD usually presents lifelong challenges for those diagnosed, for their family members and for society as a whole. Over 200,000 Canadian children, youth and adults are affected by ASD and many have very complex needs. These figures do not account for the millions of parents, other family members, caregivers, employers, teachers, researchers, professionals, and others who are also deeply affected, emotionally, socially and financially by an alarming inequity in available treatment, services, and funding for ASD.

Autism Society Canada has been working for over thirty years to promote a comprehensive federal National Autism Spectrum Disorder Strategy – we feel national action and commitment on ASD is absolutely vital in order to bring equal access to targeted health and social services for all Canadians with ASDs. **There are currently glaring gaps in the availability of fully funded treatment and**

**services for children, youth and adults with ASD.** The lifespan needs facing our community in Canada and around the globe are complex and the treatment, service and accommodation needs across the ASD spectrum are multi-faceted.

All of us in the ASD Community – persons with ASD, parents and other family members, health care professionals, educators and researchers are joining together to ensure that autism finds its rightful place in the health, education and social services systems – we envision a Canada that sets an example as world leader, with a progressive, comprehensive response to autism...a Canada where individuals with ASDs are enabled to reach their full potential.

**On this landmark World Autism Awareness Day we call on our federal leaders to take up the UN’s global challenge to act quickly to ensure the rights of some of our most unique and vulnerable citizens.**

Autism Society Canada is a nationally incorporated charity founded in 1976. ASC is a federation of Canada-wide provincial and territorial autism societies whose collective memberships represent a very large community of individuals affected by ASD and their families in Canada. ASC is committed to advocacy, public education, information and referral, and the support of its provincial and territorial autism societies.

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