

## Frequently Asked Questions – National ASD Strategy

The Canadian ASD Alliance is continuing its call for a National ASD Strategy by launching a *Blueprint for a National Autism Spectrum Disorder Strategy*. This document provides information on common questions you might receive when speaking to people about the Blueprint.

### **Why do we need a strategy?**

- Canadians on the ASD spectrum, have vastly different access to services and supports depending on where in Canada they live, both within and across provinces. Some families move across Canada to access the supports they need.
- Without appropriate supports that fit their needs, people with ASD and their families see drastically worse health, education, employment and quality of life outcomes. These effects ripple throughout their communities. We need to do better.
- We need a strategy that drives real action to make sure all Canadians with ASD and their families have full and equitable access to the resources they need across a lifespan where and when they need them.
- A strategy makes sure that we recognize the full range of needs in the spectrum, across the lifespan, and across Canada. We need a range of policies working together to drive results.

### **What are you asking for?**

- We are asking for the federal government to do three things:
  1. Federal leadership to spread best practices throughout Canada through pan-Canadian knowledge exchange.
  2. Immediate federal leadership in 5 key areas in federal jurisdiction (affordability and access; information; employment; housing; and research)
  3. A cross-government approach to ASD within the federal government that ensures action is coordinated across policy and program areas.
- As we head towards an election this fall, we are calling on all federal political parties to commit to a National ASD Strategy that delivers on the vision of this Blueprint.

### **Why now?**

- CASDA has been working towards this for 12 years, building on the important work of Senators in their 2007 report *Pay now or pay later: Autism families in crisis*.
- We can't afford to wait any longer. Families are being pushed to the breaking point. People with ASD are not receiving the support they need to achieve the quality of life they deserve.
- In 2019 we have an opportunity to launch a National ASD Strategy that makes a real difference in the lives of Canadians with ASD, their families, and their communities.

### **Isn't Autism a provincial issue?**

- ASD is not just a provincial responsibility or a federal responsibility. It is a Canadian responsibility.
- While many of the health, education and social services that support people with ASD fall under provincial jurisdiction, the federal government holds some very important levers.
- The Blueprint focuses on how the federal government can lead. To achieve the vision of in the strategy we will also need leadership from provincial and territorial governments as well as service providers, researchers, employers and others.

### **Is this a response to the Ontario government's changes to the Ontario Autism Program?**

- The Canadian ASD Alliance has been advocating for a National ASD Strategy in Ottawa and in our home communities for over a decade. The Blueprint is a response to the needs we see in our community and the opportunity for federal leadership.
- The recent changes in Ontario and the response from the community highlight some of the challenges in accessing services and supports and the importance of a strategy that responds to the range of needs across the spectrum, throughout lifespans and across Canada.

### **How much will this cost?**

- The Blueprint provides a variety of policy ideas aimed at improving everything from tax credits to improving training programs. Some of the ideas focus on making better use of existing resources and would not have any net cost. Others would improve the support available to Autistic Canadians and would require investment. Coming to a total dollar figure depends on information that is not available to people outside government. We are asking the federal government to work with the community to build a strategy that works.
- If we don't invest in making sure that Canadians with ASD get the supports they need throughout their lives, the costs will be much larger, and they will be borne largely by Canadians with ASD and their families.

### **What does it mean to have a cross-government approach to ASD?**

- Many parts of government have policies and programs that touch the lives of people with ASD. We need those various efforts to be moving in a consistent direction to work together to support Autistic Canadians.
- We are asking the Prime Minister to designate a lead minister for the national ASD strategy, working with other ministers with key responsibilities. The Lead Minister should be supported by a coordinating table of senior public servants from relevant ministries.
- A cross-government approach means that the government is considering how all policies will relate to the specific needs of the ASD community and consulting deeply with the community to shape solutions.