

Blueprint for a National ASD Strategy

The time is now.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is **the most common and fastest-growing** neurological disorder in Canada. An estimated 1 in 66 Canadians aged 5-17 are diagnosed with ASD, equivalent to approximately, 500,000 Canadians of all ages.

Autistic Canadians face significant barriers to good health, employment, and quality of life. Supports for people with ASD can be unaffordable, unavailable in their community, or a mismatch with their needs.

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Evidence-based **therapies can cost \$60,000-\$80,000 per year** for children with high needs.

We can do better.

We want to see a world where Autistic Canadians have full and equitable access to the resources they need to lead a full life regardless of where they live.

The National ASD Strategy will have to respond to the needs of vulnerable populations, such as seniors, military families and LGBTQ+ people with ASD, as well as the needs of northern & rural Canadians. An Indigenous approach should be co-developed with Indigenous partners.

A truly national strategy.

ASD is not solely a provincial responsibility or a federal responsibility. It is a Canadian responsibility. The federal government can lead by facilitating pan-Canadian cooperation and coordination, by convening a multi-ministry federal provincial territorial meeting and creating a platform to share best practices, and taking direct immediate action.

Accountability across government.

We're asking for a commitment to making fast, integrated progress on ASD within the federal government. This means assigning a lead minister, assembling cross-government tables, and mandating all relevant Ministers to collaborate. It also means leading broad consultation with the ASD community on design and implementation of a National ASD Strategy.

Immediate Federal Action

Affordability and Access



An ASD diagnosis does not carry major financial burden to access the supports people need where and when they need them

- **Reform the Disability Tax Credit**
- **Build leading ASD support into federal health systems**
- **Train the next generation of ASD professionals, including with a new CIHR institute**
- **Consistent recognition of ASD for the Medical Expense Tax Credit**
- **Enhance the Child Care Expense Deduction**

Information

Decision-makers, professionals, individuals and families have access to comprehensive and credible information about ASD to inform their decisions, and community services, employers and businesses are informed to create inclusive environments.

- **Build a learning network for practitioners and policymakers**
- **Create awareness of strategies to promote inclusion for Canadians with ASD**



Employment



Adults with ASD are employed at rates near the Canadian average and properly supported in inclusive workplaces

- **Better labour market information**
- **Access to pre-employment programming**
- **Ensure federal training programs are responsive to ASD**
- **Break down barriers in benefit design**

Housing

Autistic Canadians and their families have a variety of housing options available to them to meet their needs

- **Invest in the creation of more housing options suitable for the needs of adults with ASD, including supportive housing**
- **Prioritize innovation in housing options that provide independence and support for people with ASD**



Research



Professionals and policy makers have access to ASD research that informs their practices and Canada has world-leading research on ASD

- **Complete the National ASD Surveillance System**
- **Invest in world-leading ASD research**