

22 November 2022

Dear Honourable Minister Duclos,

On behalf of the leadership and members of Autism Alliance of Canada, we would like to offer our thanks for your continued work to advance the creation of a National Autism Strategy (NAS). Today, with this letter, we are asking for a verbal and written commitment to finalize the development of this Strategy **by 2023**, including clarity around the processes and resources to ensure its effective implementation.

We continue to be appreciative of the opportunity to support the important work being led by government officials and stakeholders to develop a crucial, comprehensive, pan-Canadian strategy to improve the quality of life for Autistic Canadians and their families.

In December 2019, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, announced a commitment to develop a National Autism Strategy. The NAS was mandated to be led by the Minister of Health and the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), with the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, to support its creation.

In 2019-2020, Autism Alliance of Canada developed and published a [Blueprint](#) and [Roadmap](#) for a National Autism Strategy built on comprehensive consultations with over 10,000 stakeholders from all provinces and territories. Informed directly by the community, these two documents captured our collective vision of how the NAS can be implemented—weaving together early impactful successes and long-term goals.

In May 2022, the Senate of Canada unanimously passed Bill S-203 to support an adoption of 'An Act respecting a federal framework on autism spectrum disorder, as amended.' At Autism Alliance of Canada, we, and our members, supported Bill S-203, and remain committed to working with the federal government to implement a robust NAS that reflects the needs of disabled Canadians and results in meaningful changes in a timely manner.

Upon the conclusion of last week's Autism Conference held by the Public Health Agency of Canada, we are asking for specific actions from the Federal Government towards fulfilling their commitment towards a meaningful NAS:

1. **Timeline:** A comprehensive timeline articulating the process of the development of a strategy with major milestones clearly articulated, including: the date of the release of the strategy.
2. **Leadership:** Assigned accountability around the approach to cross governmental leadership required to effectively implement the strategy, including the commitment of the following government officials: the Minister of Finance, the Minister of National

Revenue, the Minister of Employment and Social Development, as well as representatives of the provincial and territorial governments.

3. **Community and expert engagement:** Transparency regarding stakeholder engagement. Specifically, the ongoing process of including Autistic people, persons with lived experience—including caregivers and support persons—service providers, representatives from the medical and research communities and from organizations that focus on autism in Indigenous communities. Particularly, clarity regarding the mechanism for ongoing co-creation and engagement for the development and implementation of the Strategy.
4. **Resources:** Commitment to resource allocation for bold initiatives that will support the system-level transformation required to better health outcomes for Autistic people. This includes initiatives that can support the timely and equitable access to screening and diagnosis and post-diagnostic services across the lifespan; financial support for Autistic persons and their families; support for caregivers of Autistic persons, and; mechanisms to ensure accountability in the use of federal funds for Autistic persons and their families in every province and territory.

Through our national reach of over 600 members and servicing thousands of Canadians collectively, we are confident that Autism Alliance of Canada's diverse membership of leaders, families, and individuals can play a significant role in the continued development of the National Autism Strategy.

Our organization and our members will continue to strongly advocate that the National Autism Strategy includes significant and diverse representation of Autistic people in Canada in order to be truly reflective of the needs across the country.

We ask for your commitment to this call to action and look forward to your response on each of the four points above.

Yours sincerely,



Jonathan Lai
Executive Director, Autism Alliance of Canada