



**Autism**  
Alliance of Canada

Alliance canadienne de  
**l'autisme**



# **2025 Federal Election Toolkit**

## Edition for Organizations

Autism Alliance of Canada  
April 2025



# Introduction

Welcome to Autism Alliance of Canada's Election Toolkit. This federal election is a unique opportunity to make meaningful and lasting changes to policy and practice at the national level. Together, we can create a Canada where Autistic people exercise their full rights and realize their full potential.

This toolkit is a starting point for learning about autism in Canada, what key actions we need from our government, and simple steps for getting involved as an organization.





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# What Do We Need This Election?

## A Long Journey of Commitment and Progress

Our path to the Autism Strategy has been marked by persistent advocacy and commitment from our members and allies. The journey began with the 2007 Senate report highlighting the need for structured services to support Autistic people and their families. This was followed by key projects such as National Needs Assessment, Ready, Willing and Able and reports like the Blueprint for a National Autism Strategy in 2019 and the Roadmap towards a National Autism Strategy in 2020, along with a Policy Compendium, laying the groundwork for a national strategy.

The passage of Bill S-203, which mandated a timeline to develop a Framework for Autism, was another crucial step. Now, five years after the 2019 commitment to establish an Autism Strategy, we have heard that the real change Autistic people and their families have asked for will happen after the “implementation” phase. To deliver on its vision, “a Canada where Autistic people and their families are safe, included, accepted and supported in a way that leads to an improved quality of life”, long-term political will and financial commitments will be required.

This year’s election comes at a time of major economic uncertainty, and there is an urgent need for income security. People on the spectrum and their loved ones face significant barriers to achieving financial stability. Autistic people in Canada and their families deserve a fair chance at economic security, and it is time for politicians to commit to policies that provide stable, long-term solutions for this community.

**There is still so much more we need to do right now.**



# Our Call For Action on Autism

As Canadians head to the polls, Autism Alliance of Canada urges all political parties to commit to providing the leadership needed to ensure that Autistic people in Canada have evidence that they are valued, included, protected and enabled to fully participate in all aspects of Canadian society

We cannot let this election result in a backslide, halt or redirecting of the efforts that have created a forward momentum for achieving the necessary changes and opportunities that have significant impact on the lives of Autistic people in Canada. While the proposed National Autism Network (NAN) is a positive step forward, it is only a starting point. We can't stop here.

We need concrete action that delivers real change for Autistic people in Canada and their families.

To achieve meaningful change, substantial investment and a clear, accountable plan for implementation of Bill-S203 is required. This takes bold action, with the necessary resources, to fully realize these strategies and ensure autistic individuals have the support they need to thrive.

## We NEED all political parties to commit to:



### **Robust Funding to Enact Priorities in Canada's Autism Strategy and Bill S-203**

Canada's Autism Strategy must be backed by sufficient investment to ensure its priorities are realized; funding that directly supports the critical needs of the autistic community, from diagnosis to accessible services and employment and housing support.



### **A Clear and Actionable Implementation Plan**

It is well past time for a clear road map that includes defined timelines, measurable outcomes, and tangible results. The Strategy must move beyond rhetoric and ensure real action is taken to improve the lives of Autistic people in Canada.



### **Meaningful Action on Key Priorities**

A commitment to delivering on all the priority areas identified in Canada's Autism Strategy and Bill S-203 within a reasonable timeframe that reflects a respect for Autistic people in Canada and recognizes their legitimate needs.

# Our Ten Policy Solutions

We need tangible commitments that lead to impactful change from our Government. We believe these Ten Policy Solutions are vital to ensuring Autistic people in Canada can exercise their full rights and realize their full potential.

Please read our proposals below and see if one or more of them resonate with you. These actionable solutions align directly with the priorities identified in the Canada's Autism Strategy and are within federal jurisdiction. They reflect a consensus within the Canadian autism community:

1

## **Make the Disability Tax Credit (DTC) Simpler and More Accessible**

The government should integrate and align disability status between Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) and the CRA, eliminate reassessments for people diagnosed with autism/ID before age 16, assess for potential lifelong eligibility, and expand the list of professionals who can complete DTC assessments.

## **Make the Refundable Canada Caregiver Credit (CCC) Refundable for Families of Autistic People**

The government should make the CCC refundable, ensuring that caregivers of Autistic people receive direct financial support regardless of their tax liability.

2

3

## **Extend the Ready, Willing, and Able Program Three Years (to 2030)**

The program's funding should be extended until 2030, adding 4,000 additional jobs and expanding to more communities. This would cost \$20 million over the next five years to meet growing demand and ensure long-term success.

## **Fund Skills Development to Address the Shortage of Autism Support Workers**

The federal government should create a dedicated fund for Autism Support Worker training. This could include a \$9,000 subsidy for up to 1,000 students per year, enabling greater access to training for those who wish to enter the workforce in this critical role.

4



5

### **Collaboratively Create an Indigenous-Specific Autism Strategy**

The government should collaborate with Indigenous leaders to create and fund an Indigenous-specific Autism Strategy. This should involve appointing a lead representative to engage with Indigenous leadership and ensure that Autism support is culturally safe and appropriate.

### **Increase Canada Workers Benefit Disability (CWB) Supplement**

The government should increase the CWB disability supplement to \$2,500, which would more accurately reflect the financial needs of disabled workers and remove the disincentives to employment.

6

7

### **Increase Child Care Expense Deduction (CCED) for Autistic Children**

The government should increase the CCED for families of children on the spectrum to cover up to \$1,500 per month in child care expenses, reflecting the higher cost of specialized care.

8

### **Train Community Physicians to Diagnose and Support Autism**

The government should invest \$5.5 million per year to create targeted training for doctors in the community, enabling them to accurately diagnose Autism in children and youth and provide support for families.

9

### **Enhance the Canada Disability Benefit**

The government should enhance the Canada Disability Benefit using market basket measures to better align the benefit with the actual cost of living for disabled people in Canada, including those on the Autism spectrum.

10

### **Expand Home Accessibility Tax Credit for Autism Needs**

The government should expand the Home Accessibility Tax Credit to include modifications that are specifically designed to address the needs of Autistic people, such as sensory-friendly features and safer living environments.

**For more information, check out our “Ten Policy Solutions” [here](#)**



# How Can We Engage With Election Candidates?

## Identifying Your Representatives

You can find out who your local representatives and candidates are through the Canadian government website: <https://www.elections.ca/home.aspx>. We encourage you to contact as many representatives and candidates in your area as possible. You never know which one will win! It will also help you get to know each candidate and decide who you'd like to vote for on election day.

## Meeting in Person

Meeting face-to-face with the candidates in your riding is a great way to share your story and help candidates better understand the lived experiences of autism. It is important to understand that these in-person meetings may be difficult to secure during the election period, as campaign teams usually have the candidate going door-to-door as much as possible.

You may wish to meet the candidates by yourself, or take a family member or friend to contribute to the discussion and provide a range of experiences. You may meet at candidates' offices, in a quiet Tim Hortons, at your house or in a public space (such as a library or community centre). Do what feels best for you, and make sure you are comfortable and that the location is fully accessible.

Remember, you may end up meeting with staffers, rather than the candidates themselves. This is okay as they can inform candidates about your concerns.



## 1. Invite them to meet

Call or email the candidates you wish to meet with, giving a brief description of who you are, what your organization does, what will be discussed, while also requesting a meeting and suggesting a time and place.

See the example email on the right which can also serve as a script if you would prefer to call the candidate. Invite the candidate(s) at least two weeks before you'd like to meet.

## 2. Prepare for the meeting

To prepare, please refer to the “How Do I Prepare for a Meeting or Phone Call” on page 17 of this toolkit.

## 3. During the meeting

Meetings with candidates usually last for about 30-45 minutes. Remember, the main purpose of the meeting is to share your lived experience and what you want the candidate to do to make your life, and the lives of all Autistic people and their families/carers better. The candidate or staff member you meet with may not agree with everything you say. This can be very frustrating, but it is important that you do not express frustration or anger directly at them. Try to repeat your views and state why you hold these views, always keeping the conversation constructive.

## 4. After the meeting

It can be useful to contact your candidate after the meeting to thank them for their time, and document your understanding of what was talked about in the meeting. This can help you build your relationship with the candidate, which may be valuable if they are elected and you want to advocate to them in the future.



**You may find an example meeting request attached below.**

[Example Invitation to Meet in Person](#)

## Writing a Letter or Email

Writing letters or emails to your candidates is another great way to share your organization's priorities. In turn, receiving many emails and letters regarding the same issues informs candidates about what matters most to their voters.

### Tips for writing to candidates:

- Candidates will take letters/emails more seriously if they come from people who live in their riding. Consider asking your members to write letters to their candidates
- If you are sending an email, make sure you include a clear statement or request in the subject line. An email should be no longer than 300 words and letters no longer than one page. Any longer and it is unlikely that it will be read in full
- Be clear about why you are contacting them - name the issues that are important to you, and write about how those issues impact you, your family and/or your community
- Ask for the candidate to take a specific action. Refer to our [10 Policy Solutions](#) or check out our website for details (make sure to include the link to any items you are asking them to review). You can use those ideas, or ask for something that you know would improve life for you, or the person you are supporting
- Remember to include your contact details so they can respond to you



**Check out this example email/letter that you can tailor to your organization's priorities**

[Example Letter or Email](#)



# Making a Phone Call

Phone calls to candidates are a great way to ensure they really listen to your story, and gives them an opportunity to ask questions. If they get lots of calls about the same issue they will know it is important to Canadians.

## 1. Calling candidates

When you call a candidate's office it is unlikely that the candidate or their adviser will be able to speak to you straight away. The person who answers the call is likely to ask you to leave a message.

Before you call, you may find it helpful to prepare what you want to say in your message - see the example below. Your message should be short, but highlight the issues that are important to you and your interest in making time to talk.

You should receive a call back within a week, at least to arrange an appointment for a call with your candidate or staff member. If the day or time they suggest does not suit you, let them know. It is important the phone call takes place at a time and place you are comfortable with. If you haven't heard back from a candidate's office within a week, you may wish to call again and calmly let them know you are still waiting for a call back.

## 2. Prepare for the phone call

To prepare, please refer to the “How Do I Prepare for a Meeting or Phone Call” on page 17 of this toolkit.

## 3. During the phone call

Phone calls with candidates usually last for 15-30 minutes. Remember, the main purpose of this is to share your lived experience and tell them what actions you'd like them to take. The candidate or staff may not agree with everything you say. This can be frustrating, but it is important you do not express your frustration or anger directly at them. Try to repeat your views and state why you hold them, keep the conversation positive.



**You may find an  
example phone  
call script here**

[Example Phone Call Script](#)

## Posting on Social Media

Engaging with your local candidate can also be done via social media. Most candidates (particularly for the major parties) will have a dedicated LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, and X (formerly known as Twitter) account.

Social media is an effective way to build momentum for a campaign, particularly with hashtags (#) on X or Instagram. The Alliance uses a number of hashtags to advocate; #AutismStrategy2024, #AutismAllianceOfCanada, #cdnpoli, #policy, #Autism.

Remember, everything you post on social media may be seen by others - even people you don't intend to see it. Be sure to only post what you're comfortable being public, and protect your privacy where needed. It's also a good idea to avoid sharing your thoughts or opinions on social media when you are feeling angry. Write them down on paper or in a word document first, and then come back to review after you have had some time to process and give the feelings some space.

### **Microblogging**

Platforms like Bluesky, Threads or X enable real-time conversations with a character limit. Hashtags are most often used on those platforms.

#### **How to use microblogging to engage with your local candidate:**

- Post a tweet. They can be read by your followers and anyone who searches the chosen hashtags. Due to the 280 character limit, you should keep your message short.
- You can add an image to your post, but this is optional. If you are using an image, please use the ALT text option so that everyone can access the intent of your image and what is being shared.
- If a candidate replies to your tweet, you can respond offering to meet with them to discuss things further.



**You may find an  
example post  
here**

[Example Post](#)





## **Facebook**

Facebook is the most popular social media platform in Canada and many candidates will have their own Facebook page.

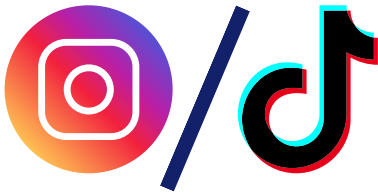
### **How to use Facebook to engage with your local candidate:**

- Share a status, photo or video on your page and tag your local candidate so they can see it. Your Facebook friends will also see your status, so this is a good way of building support from your own community. You could post a photo or video of yourself on your way to meet the candidate, or with the candidate if they give permission.
- If the candidate posts on their page about a relevant topic such as autism, education, employment or health care, you can comment on their post.
- Some candidates will have direct messaging (DM) enabled. This means you can send them a private message on Facebook. This is similar to sending an email or text message.
- You can try writing your own post on the candidate's page. This is a post that they will see as well as anyone who follows their page. Candidates may have this function disabled or review content before it is posted, so don't worry if it doesn't appear immediately. When posting on a public page, note that anyone may reply to you.



**You may find an  
example Facebook  
post here**

[Example Facebook Post](#)

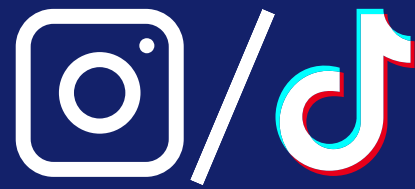


## Instagram/TikTok

Instagram and TikTok are image-based social media platforms where users can post a photo with a caption. It is a good way of gaining visibility for your message, particularly with younger people in Canada.

### How to use Instagram/TikTok to engage your local candidates:

- Write a caption to explain why you are posting and tag your local candidate if they have an Instagram/TikTok account. Please use the ALT text option so that everyone can access the intent of your image and what is being shared.
- Make sure you use the hashtags, #AutismStrategy2024, #AutismAllianceOfCanada, and #Autism. For enhanced accessibility, hashtags should be added in comments and not in the body of text of the post.



**You may find an  
example  
Instagram/TikTok  
post here**

[Example Instagram/TikTok Post](#)



# Hosting a Town Hall

Engaging your candidates at community events offers the opportunity to speak with them in an informal setting, and highlight the work your organization is doing.

## 1. Send an Invitation

Town Hall meetings increase the opportunity for public engagement and media coverage. Make sure to invite all the candidates who are standing for election in your area. You might have to select a particular riding within your organization's catchment. Are any of the candidates already appointed Ministers? That is a good way to help narrow down a riding to focus on. You also need to inform your community and volunteers if you would like them to be involved.

Having a broad group of Autistic people, families and professionals to contribute to the discussion will help your local candidates to better understand the complex issues that Autistic people and their families often have to navigate. This will be a busy time for constituents, so they might not respond to your invitation right away.

Identify a format, either a moderated debate, round table discussion, Q&A session or a combination of these options. Choose a moderator and let your invitees know who the person is so they're confident the event will be well run.

We recommend partnering with similar organizations with a disability focus. Candidates may be more interested if your topic is a bit broader and is important to even more voters.





## 2. Organize the meeting

Choose a location that attendees feel comfortable, pick a familiar location that won't be too busy or noisy so you can hear the discussion. If your organization does not have a space, civic spaces are often a good choice for holding a discussion (i.e., libraries, city halls, schools, etc.). Ensure the location is fully accessible and barrier-free.

Utilize several platforms for publicizing the meeting, such as posters, posting to social media and sharing the event through professional networks. Notify local media and share details.



## 3. Prepare for the meeting

The Town Hall is about introducing your candidates to the experiences of Autistic people in your community and how your MP can help. The discussion topics should be decided ahead of time, and help guide your group's discussion.

Assign board members or organizational leaders to greet candidates when they arrive, and escort them to their seats. The liaison should be knowledgeable about the issues.

Be sure there are beverages, even if it is just water, available.

**We hope you try one of more of these strategies this election!**



# How Do I Prepare for a Meeting or Phone Call?

Meeting with your candidates is all about telling your story as an Autistic person in Canada, or supporter of an Autistic person, and asking candidates to take action to better support you and the autism community.

Remember: a meeting or phone call will likely only last 15-30 minutes, so it is important to focus on the areas that are most important to you. You also want to make sure you leave enough time for the candidate to ask you questions - this will help them further understand your experience and what you want them to do.

If you are a family member, carer or friend who will be accompanying an Autistic person to a face-to-face meeting, you may wish to adapt the social story template [here](#).

## Sharing Your Lived Experience

You don't need to write down everything you want to say, but it may help you to write down a few key points to prompt you during the meeting or phone call. Alternatively, if you use a communication device as your primary form of communication or would feel more comfortable using such a device in your meeting, you could pre-record a 5-10 minute introduction about yourself and your lived experience.

## Some Things You May Want to Think About and Include:

1

The positive and challenging aspects of being Autistic or supporting an Autistic person.

2

The biggest barriers you currently experience when trying to be social, or access and participate in public life, e.g. public events, school, university, employment, etc.

3

Your hopes and concerns for your future and/or the future of the Autistic person you're supporting.

## Highlighting What You Want the Candidate To Do

The focus of the meeting should be on you and how advancing Canada's Autism Strategy is what you'd like them to do if they win the election. How can Canada's Autism Strategy make your life better now, and in the future? How can the next federal government best support Autistic people and their supporters?

Before the meeting, it may help to review Autism Alliance of Canada's [10 Policy Solutions](#). Choose the commitments you would most like the candidate to advocate for if they are elected. You don't need to learn about all the policy issues or latest announcements - you can refer to our summary on page 4. Feel free to use one or more of these proposed solutions in your list.

It is important to ask your candidate to make a tangible commitment to supporting Autistic people in Canada. If they do, we'd love to know, and make sure to follow-up with them if they win the election.

**You may find some example questions to ask your candidate [here](#).**





# What Next?

## Tell Us Your Story

We would love to hear about your experience or your members' experience. If you met election candidates face-to-face or had a conversation on the phone, did you feel the candidates listened to your story? Did they ask good questions? What did they say they would do if elected? Did you enjoy speaking with them? If you emailed or sent a letter to one or more of your candidates, did you receive a response? Are you willing to share it with us?

To share your experience meeting with candidates, please email [membership@autismalliance.ca](mailto:membership@autismalliance.ca)

## Share on Social Media

You may also want to share other positive aspects of your meetings, such as how it felt to share your experience and any commitments made by the candidates. This will help spread the word of which candidates are committed to supporting Autistic people in Canada.

You may want to include the candidate's handle or account name if you know it.

## Follow Up With Your Candidate

Building a positive relationship with the winning candidate will mean that you can continue to speak to them about your needs once they are in parliament and have the power to make change. We suggest sending thank you emails to the candidates you met, thanking them for listening to your story and any commitments they made in the meeting. This is also a good chance to provide them with any further information.

**Help spread awareness! Share this toolkit or the version designed for Individuals with your members today.**

**The more candidates understand autism, the better!**



# About the Alliance

Autism Alliance of Canada is a pan-Canadian network with a broad and diverse membership of Autistic people and their families and support persons, as well as clinicians, researchers, policy influencers, service providers and organizations from across Canada.

We work together as a shared leadership movement to champion Canada's Autism Strategy to ensure that Autistic people have equal rights and opportunities for full participation and acceptance in Canadian society. We harness the power of collective impact as an inclusive organization whose members, board of directors and staff reflect our commitment to Autistic participation in all aspects of our work.

If you have any questions about this tool kit or our work please feel free to contact us [here](#), or by emailing [info@autismalliance.ca](mailto:info@autismalliance.ca)

## Additional Resources:

- [Autism Alliance of Canada Welcomes the Long-Awaited Autism Strategy but Urgent Action Still Needed](#)
- [Autism Alliance of Canada Applauds Adoption of Federal Framework to Support Autistic People in Canada](#)
- [Our Ten Policy Solutions](#)
- [What Questions Can I Ask My Candidate?](#)
- [Social Story Template](#)
- [Elections Canada Voter Information](#)