

May 10, 2019

Honourable Premier Dwight Ball
1 Crosbie Place, Suite 102
St. John's, NL
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Dear Mr. Ball,

Autism Society, Newfoundland & Labrador (ASNL), is a provincial charitable organization dedicated to promoting the development of individual, lifelong, and community-based supports and services for people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), their families and caregivers. As children age, families are presented with new challenges. Our role is to ensure their concerns are understood and met with services and supports that reflect individualized differences, needs and preferences.

As Premier and leader of the Newfoundland & Labrador Liberal Party, we are seeking your response to four key questions. Please give the following questions your consideration. Prepared responses can be sent to scrocker@autism.nf.net by e-mail. We will share a copy of this letter and your response with our membership and publicly.

Your platform states:

“Your Liberal Government will increase services and supports for people across the autism spectrum and their families this year. In Budget 2019, we have allocated \$2.5 million, growing to \$5 million in following years to implement an Autism Action Plan. This plan will take a ‘whole of government’ approach in the provision of services to people with autism and their families. In total, 46 actions will fall into six focus areas:

- Awareness, acceptance, diagnosis and assessment of ASD.
- Support for individuals, families and caregivers living with ASD.
- Evidence-based treatment and management of ASD.
- Education for children and youth living with ASD.
- Living with ASD in the community.
- Professional learning and development in ASD.

Your Liberal Government will improve access to home and community support services by eliminating the criterion of IQ 70 from current eligibility requirements. This means eligibility for support services will be based on functional needs only. The Autism Action Plan will see the creation of two new programs that will ensure seamless supports across the lifespan. The Provincial Autism Services Program will expand Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) programming beyond Grade 3, for children and youth up to age 21; and, the Supporting Abilities Program for adults will encourage supportive employment opportunities.

JASPER (Joint Attention Symbolic Play Engagement Regulation) will be available to children up to age 9. JASPER is an ASD therapy that has proven, long-term positive results in children. Clinicians in the province have received extensive training in JASPER. The training will now be made available to parents and caregivers. “

Autism Society
Newfoundland & Labrador



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To follow up on these important points, we have the following questions:

Use of IQ 70 to Determine Service Provision for Adults with ASD

We believe the current practice of using a person's IQ score as a criterion for determining the need for support services and programs is exclusionary and discriminatory.

Q: Do you have a timeline in mind for the actual removal of IQ70 and how will you accommodate the needs of those who have been denied services for years?

Screening, Timely Referral and Early Identification.

We believe early identification is critical to positive outcomes for individuals with ASD and, therefore, evidence-based screening and surveillance practices must be implemented provincially.

Q: What is your position on additional tools for developmental screening to ensure those flagged for early signs of ASD receive timely and appropriate referrals? Further, will your party consider allocating funding for a Public Information Campaign about early signs of autism?

Accountability with ISSP/IEP process

We believe students with ASD need enough appropriate supports to thrive in the learning environment. This must include those who are struggling, as well as those who are gifted.

Q: How do you plan to increase accountability with the ISSP and IEP process?

Employment Equity

We believe all those on the autism spectrum, with a goal of employment, should have the opportunity to obtain and maintain 'real work for real pay'.

Q: What steps would you take to improve access to the workforce for those with ASD?

To learn more about what ASNL and the autism community identified as 'Issues That Matter', please refer to our 2018 Position Statement Booklet.

Yours sincerely,



Scott Crocker
Chief Executive Officer

