

April 18, 2019

Autism Society NL Response to Autism Action Plan

The Government of Newfoundland & Labrador has released its long-awaited Autism Action Plan. There are 46 actions in the Plan; we hope they are implemented during the next 3 years. Each action is too important to families to be delayed. Autism Society NL hopes they remain a priority through this upcoming provincial election and, more importantly, after the election. Families waited many years for a time when their loved ones can access individualized, needs-based services and supports that improve quality of life.

It appears department silos may end and there will be a comprehensive, integrated approach to autism service delivery across departments, with ease of navigation for individuals and families being a core feature. We have advocated for this for many years.

ASNL is particularly excited about several of the 46 actions.

Elimination of IQ70: Action 2.9 – Eligibility for Community Support Services will be based on functional need for support rather than intellectual disability.

Access to Quality Professional Development: Action 6.3 – ASD-specific professional development opportunities will be provided for primary health care clinicians.

Wait Times for Assessment/Diagnosis: Action 1.7 – Reduction in wait times for an ASD diagnosis by aligning diagnostic procedures with national standards.

Service Provision Uninterrupted by Transition through Life Stages: Action 2.4 – Seamless service provision for children and youth living with ASD up to age 21, through development of a new Provincial Autism Services Program.

Residential and other Supported Living Options in Community: Action 5.6 – Increased residential and other supported living options for individuals with significant complex needs.



Minister Haggie has noted on many occasions that ASNL provides supports that government does not, and cannot, replicate. They include services, supports, programs and the lived experience connections we have with individuals and families across the province. ASNL supports the Autism Action Plan and actions this government has committed to delivering.

However, while the release of this Action Plan is a huge initiative for families and communities, the \$2.5M allotted is not connected in any way to the funding shortfall at ASNL. Presently, ASNL fill a number of important service gaps that cannot be abandoned until the actions in this plan become a reality. We still face incredible financial challenges that can only result in staff layoffs/reassignments. These will impact delivery of services, supports and programs. Those who have now had an opportunity to read the Action Plan can see that some of the actions will remain the responsibility of community agencies, such as ourselves. But we will not be able to deliver on these without changes to our current financial reality.

We still hope that, included in the hundreds of millions of dollars in spending announced in Budget 2019, there is a \$300,000 increase in annual core funding for Autism Society NL, effective immediately, in this current fiscal.

[You can view the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador Press Release here](#)

[You can view an online version of the Autism Action Plan here](#)

[To read the Autism Society NL 2018 Position Statement Booklet click here](#)

Media Contacts:

Tess Hemeon
Manager, Advocacy & Communications
Autism Society, Newfoundland & Labrador
709-722-2803
themeon@autism.nf.net

-30-

