

2005-2006 Annual Report



Autism Society Canada
Société canadienne de l'autisme

Our Vision

That people with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)
achieve their individual potential and
that they and their families have universal access
to the resources they require.



Autism Society Canada
Société canadienne de l'autisme

2005-2006

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jo-Lynn Fenton, President

Sandra Weizman, First Vice-President

Nancy Adams, CA, Treasurer

Christine Dade, Secretary

Mary Fox, Director

Lynn Elkin, Director

Brigitte Harrisson, Director

Kristian Hooker, Director

Michael Lewis, Director

Elizabeth Oliver, Director

Luigi Rocca, Director

Lisa Simmermon, Director

THE YEAR IN REVIEW



ASC Board meeting discussion.

Autism Society Canada (ASC) is a national incorporated non-profit charitable organization. It was founded in 1976 by a group of parents committed to advocacy, public education, information and referral, and support for its regional societies.

ASC is a federation of Canada-wide provincial and territorial autism societies or their equivalent. By linking its member societies across the country, ASC represents the largest collective voice of the autism community in Canada. The provincial and territorial autism societies and their member groups in each region provide direct support to people with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and their families.

ASC'S GOALS

- Increase awareness and understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorders and participation of individuals with ASD
- Promote federal policies, programs, and legislation that respond to the needs of the Autism community
- Promote evidence-based services/treatment, best practices and standards
- Promote ASD research

PROGRAMS & SERVICES

- Public awareness, education and referral
- Promotion of increased participation of individuals with ASD
- Promotion of federal policies, programs, and legislation that respond to the needs of the Autism community, including a national autism strategy
- Promotion of evidence-based services/treatment, best practices and standards
- Promotion of increased tax credits for disability
- Liaising with partner organizations on behalf of persons affected by ASD

IN MEMORIUM



Peter Zwack

In November 2005 ASC suffered a severe blow with the passing of Autism Society Canada sitting President, Dr. Peter Zwack. The Canadian Autism community lost one of its most enthusiastic and hard-working supporters. As a parent of an adult son with autism, Peter was dedicated to changing the face of autism in Canada. He had a keen interest in research, especially research projects related to Autism Spectrum Disorders. Peter served on numerous committees related to autism: his scientific training coupled with his own expertise in the field of autism made him a very valuable resource for our community (and earned him the name Mr. Autism). Many of our friends and colleagues took the time to sign the memory book on ASC's website and we truly appreciated the outpouring of support to our organization and to Peter's family during a very difficult time. ASC plans to establish a scholarship in Peter's name in 2006-07.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

This has been another productive year of growth and development at Autism Society Canada. During 2005-2006 the Board, staff and volunteers at ASC have worked steadily to increase our capacity to promote awareness and to champion the national priorities facing the ASD community.

Government Relations

Educating federal officials, MPs and Senators about autism and the needs of our community has been our focus this past year. We have increased our outreach with educational presentations, federal election autism awareness activities, regular letters and updates to MPs and Senators and many face-to-face meetings with elected officials and policy makers. Early in the year, ASC President Peter Zwack and Executive Director Louise Fleming met with the Minister of Social Development, and communicated with Ministers, Senators and MPs. Promotion of policies and programs supportive of our community and the need for leadership at the federal level - including making autism a national priority - were two of the key messages we carried.

National Autism Strategy

Autism continues to be in the national news; in addition, various motions and private members' bills about autism have been presented in the House of Commons and the Senate has also concerned itself with the needs of our community. Autism Society Canada has collaborated with many stakeholders in the national autism community to identify and promote the key components of a National Autism Strategy. Our communications are focused on this strategy, whether we are writing or meeting with MPs, Senators, their advisors, the media or other interested groups or individuals.

We are encouraged by the increased awareness of autism; at the same time, we work to ensure that government recognizes the needs of our community across the lifespan and takes action that will meet the multi-faceted nature of these needs.

Community Networking and Development

As a small charity with limited resources, ASC seeks out opportunities to work collaboratively with other organizations and alliances on issues of importance to the autism community.

ASC became a member of the Canadian Alliance for Mental Illness and Mental Health (CAMIMH) in 2002 and we have taken an active role in this alliance ever since. CAMIMH has been very successful in seeking action to address mental health issues across the

lifespan of people with various brain-based conditions. In February 2006, a *Framework for Action on Mental Illness and Mental Health* was released. Part of ASC's work with our CAMIMH partners has been to ensure that the Framework terminology is inclusive of the autism community. This new Framework document is a very workable document addressing many of the issues faced by the national autism community.

In October ASC celebrated Canadian Autism Awareness Month (CAAM) with many activities including an awareness campaign with an October press release going out to all MPs and senators. In October we also attended Social Development Canada's *National Conference on Caregiving*, helping to ensure that ASD issues were represented there.

ASC took an active role in requesting information from each of the federal party leaders during the January federal election, posting all of their responses regarding their support for autism priorities on our website.

We are also involved in an ongoing collaboration with the Alberta Research Centre for Child Health Evidence in a project to undertake a systematic review of the evidence of treatments that fall within the *Behavioural/Developmental Continuum of Interventions*. We continue to provide support to other research projects focused on improving the lives of people with ASD.

We look forward to continuing our work with government, the autism community, our CAMIMH colleagues and all our other colleagues and partners to help change the face of autism in Canada.

Jo-Lynn Fenton, President



Louise Fleming (centre) and Jo-Lynn Fenton (right) appeared on MP Shawn Murphy's cable TV show.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This has been an exciting and busy year for ASC. Operational efficiency has increased greatly this year and our effectiveness as a national organization is more and more evident.

Awareness, Education and Referral

Providing information and general referrals to the public regarding all aspects of ASD continued to be an integral part of our day-to-day work in 2005-2006. ASC is frequently the first point of contact for many affected families and this year we continued to provide pro-active family support and referral. ASC receives many of requests for information each month through our website and our toll-free phone line.

Since the launch of our new website in July, 2005, we have received hundreds of requests each month for information and referral - as well as information on events, courses, other organizations - from a wide range of individuals and groups. The re-vamp of ASC's website has significantly enhanced ASC's ability to respond to enquiries from the public and to provide up-to-date information, referral and resources.

Development of Communications Tools

This year ASC produced a detailed brochure describing our organization and activities. This communication tool is available on our website and has been very useful in providing information to the public and for fundraising purposes.

In addition, an information sheet on Autism Spectrum Disorder was developed. *What is Autism Spectrum disorder?* is also available on the site and has been used extensively as a handout for awareness events and government communications.

Informing the Media

National, regional and local media frequently turn to ASC to obtain national autism information. In addition to providing media releases and letters to the editor, ASC regularly represents the interests of the community in Global and National TV News interviews, CBC Radio, and Globe&Mail interviews.

We are very appreciative of the support we receive from our many partners throughout the year.

*Louise Fleming,
Executive Director*

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT: MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Working Toward Inclusivity

2005-2006 has been a year of significant challenges and accomplishments here at ASC. The composition of our Board of Directors, which in the past has been almost exclusively parents of individuals with autism, now has two members with a diagnosis of an Autism Spectrum Disorder. In addition, two new directors-at-large, with special knowledge and abilities, have also been added.

This will greatly assist ASC to achieve our stated mission: to work with our many partners to address the national priorities facing the autism community.



ASC Board Members at work.

ASC Advisory Committee of Individuals with ASD

Chaired by director-at-large Brigitte Harrison, this committee is composed of individuals with ASD appointed by ASC's member societies. At present, the seven committee members have just begun to explore ways for them to meet. Dr Kevin Stoddart is assisting this committee in its work. We are still looking for funds to support the start-up for this important committee that hopes to begin its work in earnest in 2006-2007.

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT: SCIENTIFIC ISSUES AND PUBLIC AWARENESS

Website Development



It is through the provision of information and referral via our website that ASC meets the first goal of our organization: to increase awareness and understanding of

ASD and participation of individuals with ASD. ASC's goal to increase awareness and understanding of autism spectrum disorders has been the SIPA Committee's main objective this year. In support of that objective our website has been modernized and updated this year. This required an extensive review of the site, research of current information and resources to ensure that our site offers up-to-date information on ASD. Our site serves individuals with ASD and other developmental disabilities, caregivers, parents, and other family members across Canada as well as healthcare professionals, researchers, clinicians, educators, policymakers and governmental officials.

In July 2006 ASC launched a modern, accessible site in English that meets the diverse needs of its users.

Website in French

The website development plan includes a full version of the site in French, to be made available in the 2006-2007 fiscal year. Late this fiscal year ASC secured funding for translation services and web development of a dedicated French language ASC website. By the end of the 2006 fiscal year work was well underway on translation of the main sections of the website as well as technical development of the site. Development of our new website in French will ensure that French-language Canadians have the opportunity to access national information about autism in their mother tongue: at present, there are no pan-Canadian French-language websites available.

FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES

2005-2006 was an ambitious year for Autism Society Canada as we continued to build on the successful projects initiated this past year. Given the need to raise more funds to support the expanding work of ASC, a priority has been placed on fundraising and partnership development.

Our website has made it easier for individuals and corporations to donate to ASC. An arrangement with Charity.ca has helped us to receive credit card donations as well. During this year ASC became an adherent to Imagine Canada's ethical fundraising and financial accountability code.

In September, 2005 ASC began selling awareness bracelets to the public through our website; member societies were offered the bracelets at cost. The response from the public and our members to our Canadian bracelet - complete with a maple leaf and red and white mottled colouring - has been very positive.

Many young people brought their energy and enthusiasm to support ASC's work this year. In November 2005, the students of Sacred Heart School in Stittsville, Ontario helped to raise awareness of Autism Spectrum Disorders, doing morning announcements about autism and selling



Student volunteers at Sacred Heart School.

bracelets in their school and in the community. In addition, a group of students at Carleton University and Ottawa University organized a gala event during March 2006 to raise awareness and funds for ASC. Thank you very much for your voluntary efforts.

ASC also received generous support from the Birks Family Foundation and the Egan Family Foundation during this past year.

LOOKING AHEAD

Continued Development of Website Content

Updating and development of the English website content will be ongoing and we look forward to the launch of the ASC site in French during the summer of 2006.

OUR SUPPORTERS

The work of ASC is made possible by grants from the Office for Disability Issues at Social Development Canada. We would also like to extend our thanks to the following corporations and foundations for their contributions in support of Canadians with ASD. ASC's activities would not be possible without their support.

Air Canada Pilots Association
 Battlefords ECIP
 The Birks Family Foundation
 BI & I
 Coalition Entertainment Management
 Deer Ridge Golf Club
 EDC Friends and Coworkers
 The Egan Family Foundation
 Family Speech and Language Services
 First Baptist Church
 Hands On Technology Inc.
 H. Keer Construction Ltd.
 INCO Ltd.
 ITG Canada Corp.
 Kimberly-Clark Inc.
 Mother Teresa Catholic School
 Palmone Canada
 Pyramid Educational Consultants of Canada
 Toyota Canada
 Sepracore Canada
 Shelburne & District Lions Club Inv.
 SMILE Program
 St. Michael's Oldtimers Hockey Club
 TD Canada Trust
 United Way
 United Way - Alberta Capital Region
 United Way of Halifax Area
 United Way Ottawa
 United Way of P.E.I.
 United Way of Greater Toronto
 Upper Valley Autism Resource Centre
 University of Moncton

Many thanks also to our private donors for their generous donations and bequests during the 2005-2006 year.

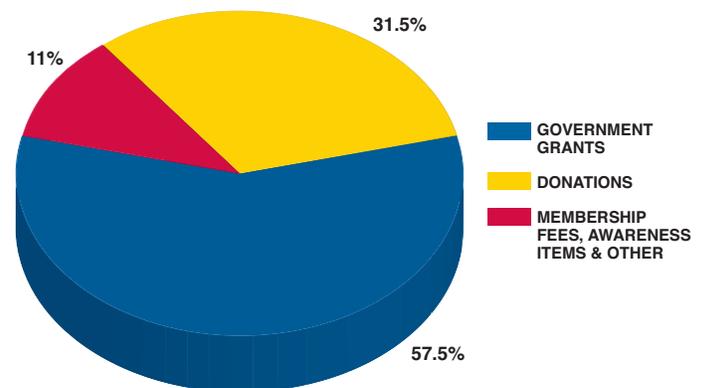
TREASURER'S REPORT

Because of its small size and limited financial resources, ASC manages its finances carefully. All spending activities are planned and prioritized through the budget process and carefully monitored throughout the year. Such exercise of good financial stewardship is reflected in the audited financial statements, (available on request) which show positive cash positions at March 31st, 2005 and 2006.

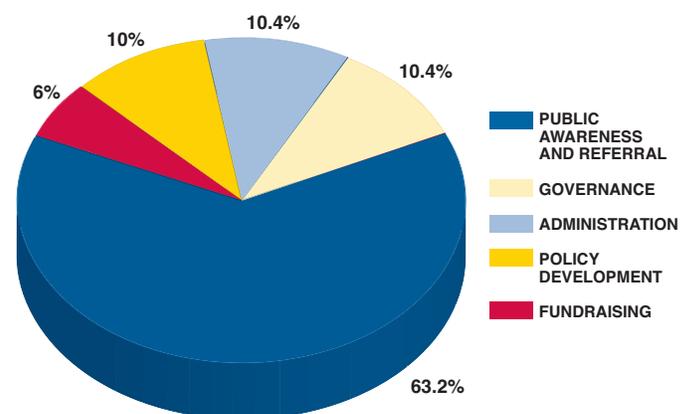
Nancy Adams, CA, Treasurer

FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Year ended March 31, 2006



Total Revenues: \$182,639



Total Expenditures: \$162,555

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No society at this time.

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