Autism Society Canada (ASC) is a national incorporated non-profit charitable organization. It was founded in 1976 and is 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 is a significant collective voice for 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 community 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
- Focus on 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

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.

2006-2007 Highlights

President’s Report

This has been another productive year of growth and development at Autism Society Canada (ASC). During 2006-2007 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 Autism Spectrum Disorder community.

Autism Society Canada has had the honour to work alongside a dedicated, passionate and knowledgeable community across Canada that works tirelessly for change. I would like to
thank the staff and volunteers of our member societies for their ongoing assistance and collaboration.

I would also like to acknowledge the significant volunteer contribution of past-President Jo-Lynn Fenton, past-First Vice-President Sandra Weizman, and the hard work of our outgoing Executive Director, Louise Fleming. During 2006-2007 their efforts were instrumental in increasing the capacity of ASC, enabling the organization to focus the majority of its resources on program activities: increasing awareness of Autism Spectrum Disorders; promoting policies and programs that respond to the needs of our community; promoting evidence-based services/treatment, best practices and standards; and promoting ASD research.

I look forward to working with our Board and plan to build on ASC’s long history to further strengthen the organization’s role as a key participant and national voice in the autism community. We embrace the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead of us to ensure that the diverse concerns of people with ASDs and their families are well-represented at the national level.

**Government Relations**

Educating federal officials, MPs and Senators about autism and the needs of our community has been an important focus this past year. In April we welcomed the new government with a mail out and press release to newly elected MPs calling for their leadership, attention and action on ASD issues. ASC past-President Jo-Lynn Fenton and Executive Director Louise Fleming met with Tony Clement’s staff at Health Canada and with MPs Penny Priddy, Mike Lake, Steven Fletcher and also spoke with another 10 MPs or their office staff throughout the year. Our key message in all of these communications was the need for more leadership at the federal level to make autism a national priority. We continue to urge government to provide the strategic vision so desperately needed to ensure that Canadian children, youth and adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder are able to reach their full potential and that they and their families receive the services and supports necessary to achieve this.

**Canadian Mental Health Commission and the Creation of a Mental Health Transition Fund:** The Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology released its final report on mental health issues in Canada on May 9, 2006. It included areas that are important for people with ASD, their families/caregivers, and their communities. ASC supported the establishment of a Canadian Mental Health Commission and the creation of a Mental Health Transition Fund; we believe that some of the specific needs of our community can begin to be addressed at the national level when these two key recommendations are implemented. We were also pleased that in this report the Senate Committee recognized the need for more targeted work on autism.

**A National Strategy on Autism:** More than three years have passed since Autism Society Canada began its call to the federal government to put in place a comprehensive national autism strategy to address the lifespan needs of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders. 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. Among the components of this strategy, ASC has been calling on government to make autism a national priority by initiating ASD surveillance and reporting, by increasing support for ASD research, and by holding a national symposium on autism in Canada.

In November, 2006 the Federal Minister of Health announced that Health Canada would begin consultations to develop an ASD surveillance program at the Public Health Agency, would establish a research chair to focus on effective treatments and interventions, and would hold a National Autism Symposium in 2007 to bring together key stakeholders, including provinces and territories, persons with ASD, families, researchers and other members of the autism community. In addition, Health Canada has designated the Health Policy Branch as the lead on ASD issues for the Federal Health Portfolio and has created a page on its website to guide the public to ASD information. While these initiatives are welcome, there is still much work to be done toward the establishment of a national autism strategy to address the pressing lack of standardized treatment and services in many areas of the country and the lifespan challenges facing individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders.

**The Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology Hearings on Autism Treatment:** The Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology met with numerous stakeholders in the autism community during the months of November and December, 2006, to receive advice and information regarding all aspects of autism treatment in Canada. Along with many others involved in Canada’s autism community, ASC’s President and Executive Director both presented papers at the Senate Committee hearings in December, 2006. Autism Society Canada was pleased to have been invited to participate in this roundtable discussion on autism treatment. In addition to being able to put forward our Canadian Autism Strategy message, ASC also had the opportunity to speak with many of the Senators in more detail regarding lifespan service and treatment needs across Canada.

Two members of ASC’s Advisory Committee of Adults with ASD also presented before the Committee. Kristian Hooker, ASC Board Member and Chair of the Committee spoke about his life with ASD and Jason Oldford also presented before the committee.

**Annual General Meeting, Ottawa, September 16-17, 2006**

At ASC we continue our journey to become a strong national voice of the autism community in Canada. In September of 2006, ASC was able to hold its first face-to-face meeting since February 2005. Member societies participated in this meeting and reported on their current activities and concerns.

**Governance:** At the September meeting ASC worked on its governance development with the services of a professional Management Consultant, Barry McDougall. Work was done to build up ASC Standing Committees, including the Governance, Membership, Communications and Public Affairs, and Finance Committees and to develop a process for creating terms of reference for these committees.
Concurrent with the September, 2006 AGM, ASC was able to create the first opportunity for ASC’s Advisory Committee of Adults with ASD to meet face-to-face. The Board was also delighted to be able to meet for the first time with its Advisory Committee. Chaired by Director-at-Large, Kristian Hooker, this committee is composed of individuals with ASD who are appointed by ASC’s member societies. When ASC began the process of setting up this committee, the Board identified the need for professional advice on ways of making ASC as open as possible to people with ASD. The Committee has worked with the assistance of Dr Kevin Stoddart who is a strong supporter of ASC and a very knowledgeable professional in the autism field. Dr. Stoddart has assisted the Advisory Committee in its work to provide support and expertise to the ASC board on adult ASD issues.

First, let me say that there is no universal “guide” to Autism. There are countless differing degrees of Autism and different kinds of ASDs. To truly get a universal understanding of Autism, you’d have to talk to thousands of individuals and families.

Kristian Hooker, ASC Board Member and Chair, Advisory Committee of Adults with ASD

Autism Society Canada was very pleased to receive the first formal report of its Advisory Committee of Adults with ASD at the Board of Directors meeting in February, 2007. This document sets an important precedent for ASC, allowing us to hear directly from individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder. The report calls for a better understanding of the needs and life issues of adults with ASD and increased services to meet these needs. This report is, as far as we know, the first of its kind in North America and was distributed through our newsletter and is posted on our website.

Community Networking and Partnerships

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.

Work with Canadian Alliance for Mental Illness and Mental Health (CAMIMH): ASC became a member of 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. CAMIMH and its individual members fully support the recommendations of the Senate Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology contained in their May 2006 report, “Out of the Shadows at Last – Transforming Mental Health, Mental Illness and Addiction Services in Canada” CAMIMH was a strong supporter of the establishment of the Canadian Mental Health Commission.

ASC is also involved in an ongoing
collaboration with the Alberta Research Centre for Child Health Evidence in a project which is undertaking a systematic review of treatments that fall within the Behavioural/Developmental Continuum of Interventions. ASC continues to provide support to other research projects focused on improving the lives of people with ASD.

During 2006-07, staff and Board Members attended the Hamilton Offord Centre for Child Studies Conference; the International Autism Research Conference organized by IMFAR; the Mood Disorders Society Research and Planning Workshop on Stigma; and Social Development Canada’s National Conference on Caregiving.

We look forward to continuing our work with our member societies, government, the autism community and all our other colleagues and partners to help Canadians with ASD realize their full potential.

**Dr. Peter Zwack Memorial Scholarship**

In November 2005 the Canadian Autism community lost one of our most enthusiastic and hard-working supporters with the death of ASC’s sitting President, Dr. Peter Zwack. With enormous gratitude for his contribution ASC announced the introduction of a memorial research scholarship in memory of Dr. Peter Zwack and the work he so diligently championed in the ASD field.

**Awareness, Education and Referral**

**Information and Referral Service:**
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 2006-2007. ASC is frequently the first point of contact for many families, people with ASD, and other professionals in the field and this year we continued to provide pro-active support and referral. At present there is tremendous regional disparity across the country in the availability of information and services. We also receive inquiries from other countries regarding services and treatments available in Canada.

ASC is providing a unique national referral service – receiving over 1,500 requests during 2006-07 through our toll-free phone line and through e-mail. During 2006-07 ASC responded weekly to 20 to 30 email and 10 to 20 voice mail requests (via toll-free number) on a wide range of subjects related to autism. These inquiries are from parents, professionals and educators seeking referrals, from people seeking training opportunities, and from people with ASD seeking information on services and on ASD. In addition, ASC received 20 to 30 requests per week to post conferences, new resources, links, etc., on our website. During 2006-07 we had over 40 Canadian autism events listed on the site at any given time.

**Open Letters and Press Releases:** ASC produced a number of open letters to our community detailing current events and several other press releases during the past year. These included two releases supporting a national autism strategy, a full outline of Autism Society Canada’s criteria for a
national autism strategy, a special release to celebrate Canadian Autism Awareness Month, a response to the Minister of Health’s November announcement of new autism initiatives and a call for further government action of ASD treatment, service and support needs.

**Canadian Autism Awareness Month (CAAM) Events:** Friends and colleagues across the country joined together with ASC to raise awareness about Autism Spectrum Disorders during Canadian Autism Awareness Month in October, 2006. Events related to CAAM were held across the country and ASC was able to help some of the provincial societies hold special events by fundraising specifically for CAAM. A special CAAM pamphlet was developed and distributed to partners across the country to help educate Canadians about autism. Highlight events included cross-Canada screenings of Vancouver filmmaker Maryann Kaplan’s film, *The Boy Inside*, with post-film receptions and discussion evenings; an Autism Society Manitoba screening of the Taylor Cross and Keri Bowers film, *Normal People Scare Me*; provincial theatre events hosted by the Autism Society of Alberta; autism awareness family events hosted by Newfoundland and Labrador and AS Cape Breton; PSAs in New Brunswick, lectures hosted by the AS Nova Scotia and AS Newfoundland and Labrador; and an event hosted by Autism Yukon to celebrate CAAM and launch their new resource: *ASD: A Yukon Guide to Services*.

In addition, **TST Overland Express employees and management partnered with Autism Society Canada** in a large educational campaign to raise awareness and understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorders within the company, and with its customers and suppliers. They also held many fundraising events during October to raise funds for ASC.

**Development of Communications Tools**

This year ASC changed its “look” with a more modern logo and colours to match its website.

**English Website Development:** ASC’s website is an essential tool used to meet the first goal of our organization: to increase awareness and understanding of ASD and participation of individuals with 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. Since the launch of ASC’s new national website in July, 2005 we have seen a steady increase in requests for information and referral. As well we have received more and more information on events, courses, other organizations and resources for people with ASD and their families from a wide range of individuals and groups. The revamp of the website has significantly enhanced ASC’s ability to respond to enquiries from the public and to provide up-to-date information and referral. Changes and additions to the site are ongoing. In 2006, significant changes were
made to the research section of the site, a search engine was added and better statistical reporting, event forms and feedback tools were implemented.

**French Website Development:** As resources allowed during April and May of 2006, translation and technical development continued on four of the main sections of the English website. Our French version of the site was launched at the end of July, 2006.

**Newsletter:** ASC launched its first *ASC Today* newsletter in October, 2006, with a follow-up newsletter in March 2007. This newsletter has been very popular with our many new subscribers over the year and a very comprehensive online distribution network has been developed. The newsletter allows ASC to include its partners and funders in outreach to the community and provides an excellent vehicle to distribute ASC reports, press releases, Board and member profiles, open letters and organizational news.

**Working with the Media:** National, regional and local media regularly contacted ASC this past year to obtain information about autism and to seek ASC’s perspective on many autism issues. ASC was interviewed on the national television media: CBC, CTV and Global, as well as by the print media, such as *The Globe & Mail*, *Toronto Star*, *The Montreal Gazette* and many others.

**Fundraising Activities**

2006-2007 was another ambitious year for Autism Society Canada as we continued to build on ASC’s fund development capacity. With the help of a consultant who works with charitable organizations, ASC conducted a fall campaign to raise more funds from the corporate sector. New fundraising tools were developed, including bookmarks, corporate certificates, handouts, etc. A new database to track and correspond with donors was also developed. Donations via website are steadily increasing. During 2006 ASC designed and began selling autism awareness pins to the public through our website. These, as well as awareness bracelets, were offered at cost to member societies to use as fundraisers.

Many volunteers brought their energy and enthusiasm to support ASC’s work this year with local fundraisers and awareness events across the country such as Fore Our Future Charity Golf fundraiser held in June, 2006 and the CANASA Golf Tournament held in August 2006. We thank these supporters very much for their voluntary efforts on behalf of ASC.

During 2006, **TST Overland Express**, a division of Transforce – a leading Canadian transportation and logistics organization – partnered with Autism Society Canada to raise awareness and understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorders within its company, and with its customers and suppliers. For two weeks in October, during Canadian Autism Awareness Month, the company’s 1,100 employees from across the country received a series of educational brochures and posters on autism prepared by TST Overland Express. Employees also participated enthusiastically in a variety of creative fundraising activities: from bingos, candy grams, chili cook-offs, and raffles to dances and pecan pie sales! TST’s employees
raised $22,000 from their awareness campaign activities and the company matched that amount for a total donation of $44,000. During 2006, ASC also received a very generous donation from Air Canada/West Jet.

Looking Ahead

The ASC Board is looking forward to working with staff, our society members and other partners over the coming year to continue to further strengthen ASC’s programs and services and to ensure that we can continue to respond to the growing demand for information. We are committed to continuing to meet the needs of parents and families, people with ASD and professionals seeking information and referral services. We also hope to increase ASC’s capacity to support provincial and territorial programs in cooperation with our member societies who provide these direct services.

Work on Board and standing committee development will continue to be vital and ASC will be working hard to raise the funds necessary for important face-to-face meetings of our membership and Board as well as our Advisory Committee of Adults with ASD. The Advisory Committee has plans to expand its membership during 2007-08 and hopes to further assist ASC with communications support and advice on adult issues.

We will also be fundraising to allow us to continue our present work and to expand programming the following areas:

- **Information and Services Directory:** Development of more streamlined coast-to-coast referral and information system in partnership with our provincial and territorial societies and other community stakeholders.

- **Research into gaps in services and programming** for people with ASDs across the country.

- **Identification of successful programming efforts** that can be used as models for member societies.

- **Partnership development and input:** ASC is asked by many groups, alliances and government programs to provide input on ASD issues, needs and resources. We hope to be able to continue to meet this demand for representation of national ASD issues in the wider research, disability, mental health and ASD networks.

- **English website:** As funds allow, we will be able to proceed further with our research and website content, developing new information for adults on vocational opportunities; living accommodations and choices, discrimination; understanding and dealing with diagnosis, dealing with labels; preventing social isolation; young adult social issues; healthcare and sexuality, and mental health issues for adults. We would also like to continue to develop the site in the areas of child-friendly resources for learning about ASDs; anti-bullying
awareness tools; resources and diagnostic tools for health professionals; and information for parents, caregivers, family members and spouses.

- **French website**: The website development plan includes a full version of the site in French, to be made available in the 2007-2008 fiscal year if funds are available. Continued development of our 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.

- **Online resources**: ASC would also like to develop new online resources and educational materials for the public and for health professionals and teachers.

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**2006-2007 Board of Directors**

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Lynn Elkin, Secretary, Northwest Territories  
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Sandra McKay, Manitoba  
Elizabeth Oliver, Newfoundland & Labrador  
Lisa Rawlings, Yukon Territory  
Luigi Rocca, New Brunswick  
Lynn Verklan, Saskatchewan

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**Current 2007-2008 Board of Directors**

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Doreen Stryde, Newfoundland & Labrador  
Lynn Verklan, Saskatchewan
Financial Highlights

Treasurer’s Report
ASC’s Board of Directors manages its activities and spending with care and diligence. Spending is planned and monitored through the budget and regular reports are provided to the Board showing performance against budget. At March 31, 2007 as in prior years, careful financial stewardship was reflected in a positive cash position at year end.

The work of ASC though 2006-2007 has depended on financial support from individual donors, corporate and foundation supporters and our government partner. ASC also benefits from the substantial volunteer time committed by its members, Directors, ASC’s Advisory Committee of Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders, and others.

This year, ASC confronts a significant financial challenge — 2007/08 is the third and final year of a three-year funding agreement, whereby the Government of Canada, through the Office of Disability Issues of Social Development Canada, has provided some operating support to ASC. This core funding has been extremely helpful, enabling ASC to build its capacity to meet the growing demand from Canadian families, people with ASD, researchers, educators, students and service professionals for critical information and referral on autism issues. ASC will be working diligently during 2007-08 to secure similar operational funding to ensure continuing stability for our programming.

Nancy A Adams, CA, Treasurer
Thanks to Our 2006-2007 Supporters!

Many thanks to our private donors for their generous memorial and individual donations during the 2006-2007 year. ASC is also the beneficiary of third party fundraising efforts. Volunteers have worked hard organizing community events across the country to raise awareness of ASD while also raising funds for the work of our organization. Thanks to all of you for your time, energy and dedication.

The work of ASC has also been 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
- Alan MacDonald Ltd.
- Autodesk Inc.
- Barefoot Venus
- Bayridge Public School
- Brassaii Bistro Lounge
- 135775 Canada Incorporated Construction Junie
- 6300979 Canada Incorporated
- Canadian Security Association (CANASA)
- Canadian Showtime Chorus
- Carriage Hills Resort Corporation
- Cold Lake Foods
- The Co-operators
- EECOL Electric
- Equitrix Management Inc.
- Expertech
- Fore Our Future
- Geoffrey H. Wood Foundation
- Goemans Appliances
- GotMyKidsTM
- House and Home Media
- Industrial Alliance
- INCO Limited
- Jesse’s Journey Fundraiser
- JVC Canada
- Ketchum Canada Inc.
- Kooy Brothers Lawn Equipment
- Leon’s Furniture Limited
- Mitel Networks Corporation
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- SNC Lavalin
- St. Andrews Maple
- St Paul Guarantee Insurance Company
- Toyota Canada Inc.
- The Tree Of Life Foundation
- TST Overland Express
- United Way Local Groups
- Upper Valley Autism Resource Centre
- Velocity Express
- WestJet Airlines Ltd.
Provincial and Territorial Societies

**Autism Society of Alberta:**  
c/o Autism Society of Edmonton Area  
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Program Director, Lyn Parker  
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and c/o Autism Calgary Association  
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174, 3359 - 27th Street NE, Calgary, AB T1Y 5E4  
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**Autism Society of British Columbia**  
President, Michael Lewis  
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**Autism Society of Manitoba**  
President, Sandra McKay  
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**Autism Society of New Brunswick**  
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**Autism Society of Newfoundland and Labrador**  
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**Autism Northwest Territories**  
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**Autism Society P.E.I.**  
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**Fédération québécoise de l’autisme et des autres troubles envahissants du développement**  
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