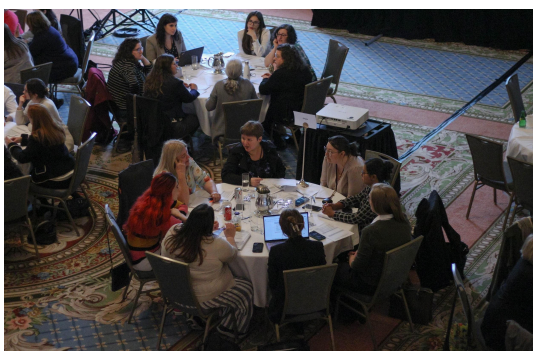


Community Brief

Building Blocks for Provincial and Territorial Policy-Shaping:

What We Heard from Canadian Autism Leadership Summit 2024 Participants.



This brief is a product of Autism Alliance of Canada's 2024 Canadian Autism Leadership Summit (“Summit”). It contains information about the event, what we talked about there, and what comes next for the Alliance based on the event.

What You Can Do with this Brief

As a Policymaker

This brief can provide you with important information on community perspectives across different regions of Canada, so you can focus on those things in your work.

As an Advocate

This brief can be a starting point for talking to policymakers and other advocates in your region about what is needed to work together more effectively.

Background: The Current Landscape

Each province and territory in Canada is responsible for delivering services and supports to Autistic Canadians and their families. Since each jurisdiction is diverse, there are differences in how these services and supports are provided. A National Autism Strategy can provide an overarching framework that guides the approaches each jurisdiction takes to support Autistic people and their families across Canada.



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Cross Cutting Themes

The purpose of the 3-hour interactive workshop session was to provide participants the opportunity to work through four building blocks of policy-influencing at the provincial and territorial level: (1) Taking stock of, (2) generating, (3) prioritizing, and (4) refining policy solutions. Different tables and online groups worked on a specific province, territory, or region (an area of Canada that includes multiple smaller provinces or territories). The different groups often reached different outcomes from each other by the end. Nevertheless, some interesting cross-cutting ideas, or themes, could be seen drawn from the notes that were taken at each table. Much of the content discussed across the different groups related

to the programs or services that different government ministries are responsible for :

- **Education access and quality (kindergarten-secondary).**
Topics discussed: integrated versus streamed classrooms, timely access to educational assessments, access to classrooms by outside therapists, human rights issues (e.g., sending children home/denying access), educator training, and overcoming barriers to accountability.
- **Child and family services.**
Topics discussed: improving provision to remote populations, funding schemes, refining intake systems, needs assessment,



waitlist management, and unique province/territory-specific programs (e.g., refining aspects of [Ontario Autism Program](#) accessibility such as determination of needs).

- **Health and diagnosis.** Topics discussed: reducing diagnostic wait-times, capacity for diagnosing adults, remote access, interdisciplinary diagnostic services, access to primary health providers, and addressing the experience of denied service.
- **Social services (adult).** Topics discussed: Funding models (e.g., utility of [Ontario's Passport funding model](#)), income programs, province/territory-specific programs, adult service coordination, service provider training, service accessibility, rural-based infrastructure, and peer support.
- **Employment.** Topics discussed: Scaling up pilot programs, province/territory-specific programs, supporting retention, transition from education/postsecondary, and employer education and training.
- **Housing.** Topics discussed: Social housing, appropriate supports, community involvement, rural housing

access, affordability, and accessibility.

A special type of service that applies to multiple ministry-specific programs was also discussed:

- **Service accessibility and navigation.**
 - Topics discussed: supports for caregivers (e.g., designing supports in New Brunswick that empower families to make decisions about the best supports for their and their child's situation), supports for Autistic adults (e.g., help navigating aspects of daily life including work life, food shopping and nutrition, accessing health professionals), service coordinators, accessibility and simplification of application processes and forms, web site organization, empowerment, and training of professionals (such as doctors, teachers, psychologists, etc.) on autism.

There were some cross-cutting aspects of provincial/territorial policy that were discussed at many tables:

- **Cross-ministry integration.**
 - Topics discussed: Cross-department and -ministry coordination and steering, integrated service

delivery, collaboration and communication frameworks, adoption of the [PEI Autism Coordinating Committee model](#) (and the Australian example), cross-ministerial initiatives, service delivery by non-profit organizations (discussed by multiple low population provinces), memoranda allowing professionals to go between health and education, and leveraging existing groups or meetings.

- **Acknowledging the unique character of a province/territory or region.**

- Topics discussed: Differences of Indigenous cultures and circumstances (e.g., importance of non-colonial world views, joint federal-provincial delivery), geographical considerations (e.g., increase rural focus with local service availability), province size, cultural considerations for serving areas with high new Canadian populations, community responsiveness, and incorporating community-level capacity building (e.g., adding an Indigenous-led aspect into

the Accessibility Legislation, signing one's child over to Child and Family services to gain access to residential services in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island).

- **Information openness and transparency.**

- Topics discussed: financial transparency, wait-time transparency, publicize service availability (e.g., using [the Manitobans Act](#), which would provide information and communication to Autistic individuals), public data on program utilization and impact, require data from service recipients, Autistic student school attendance data (education access accountability), promoting public trust through transparency, data to allow intersectional analysis, and importance of collecting and controlling data outside of government.

Indigenous-specific policy, where the same types of programs and services are under a mix of federal and provincial/territorial jurisdiction, were discussed in depth at some tables. Topics discussed: [Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#) recommendations, [Jordan's principle](#), joint federal-provincial planning, considering a



needs-based approach at the (Indigenous) community level, and organizing services to serve remote communities.

Finally, aspects of policy design were also discussed:

- **Codesign and involving lived experience.** Topics discussed: Shift to the expectation of involving lived experience in policy design, breadth/diversity of representation, importance of Indigenous perspectives, transparency of engagement processes, program codesign with Autistic

people, and inclusion/representation at the governance level.

- **Promoting adoption of policy solutions.** Topics discussed: Suggesting pilot projects to avoid need for long-term commitment, small steps to sustain or scale what works, presenting solutions as aligned with or extensions of existing policies or programs (build on what exists), frame the solution as “their government’s idea,” starting with easy wins (practical), and efficiency proposals that ultimately save money.

Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan & the Prairies

Part 1: Assessment of Current Policies and Programs

In our evaluation of existing public policies, programs, and supports for individuals with disabilities, particularly focusing on autism, several strengths and challenges have been identified.

Box 1. Strengths

- [Manitoba Possible](#) stands out as an exemplary program, receiving government funding and providing crucial services and supports, with a notable focus on physical disabilities and the deaf and hard of hearing communities. There is a recommendation for its expansion to include support for Autistic individuals.
- Notable coordination across departments has been observed in certain instances, indicating successful cross-departmental collaboration.
- The presence of [specialty centers](#) complemented by an increased number of community professionals indicates a positive trend in service provision.

Box 2. Challenges

- A needs-based approach to legislation is lacking, necessitating reform to ensure equitable access to services.
- Fragmented policies, particularly regarding autism, require a shift towards a comprehensive, pan-disability approach.
- Existing legislation, such as the [Manitoba Caregiver Tax Credit](#) and the [Appropriate Education Act](#), may inadvertently exclude Autistic individuals or lack specificity for their needs.
- Accessibility standards need enhancement to encompass the diverse needs of Autistic individuals across various domains such as built environment, employment, and transportation.



- Greater emphasis on supporting individuals with co-occurring intellectual disabilities is warranted, with a focus on expanding services and supports.

Part 2: Proposing Policy Solutions

In light of identified challenges, several policy solutions have been proposed to enhance support for Autistic individuals:

- Formal policies addressing transitions to adulthood and seniorhood, ensuring continuity of services and resources.
- Shifting from deficit-based to needs-based assessments to better tailor support services.
- Establishing interdepartmental steering groups and community collaboration forums to facilitate policy development and implementation.
- Prioritizing inclusive governance models and proactive, preventive strategies.
- Ensuring housing accessibility, particularly in rural areas, and enhancing support services at critical transition points.
- Strengthening autism education and training for professionals across various sectors.
- Implementing accountability measures co-designed with individuals and families.

Part 3: Prioritizing Solutions and Overcoming Resistance

While prioritizing solutions, considerations include the potential impact, practicality, and ease of government adoption. Recommendations include:

- Prioritizing policies based on impact and aligning with existing government priorities.
- Advocating for family-centered approaches and educating stakeholders on accessibility.
- Emphasizing fiscal responsibility and transparent accountability measures in assessing solutions.



Part 4: Refining Solutions and Addressing Resistance

To refine proposed solutions and overcome potential resistance from decision-makers:

- Establishing a cross-ministerial community coordinating committee by November 2024, aligned with the [National Autism Strategy](#) release.
- Ensuring adequate representation from Alberta in relevant working groups and committees.
- Engaging families in advocating for solutions and promoting community accountability.
- Reviving collaborative efforts with stakeholders to confirm priorities and garner support from key decision-makers.

In summary, addressing the identified challenges and implementing proposed solutions will require concerted efforts from government agencies, community stakeholders, and individuals with lived experience to ensure equitable access to support services for Autistic individuals across the Prairie provinces.



Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island & Newfoundland

Part 1: Evaluation of Current Policies and Programs

Our assessment of existing public policies, programs, and supports for Autistic individuals across Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland has revealed both strengths and challenges.

Box 1. **Strengths**

- Certain aspects of public policies exhibit positive attributes, particularly in [employment policies](#) in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.
- One such public policy is that people who are designing and running the autism programs are treated well.
- There are [integrated service delivery mandates](#) in place, aiming to streamline services across age groups.
- Some regions provide residential care, albeit with certain limitations and challenges.
- [New Brunswick Preschool Autism Program](#).

Box 2. **Challenges**

- Lack of coordination and geographical disparities in funding allocation result in inadequate support distribution, particularly for individuals with diverse needs.
- Funding mechanisms often prioritize short-term outcomes over long-term sustainability.
- Limited adult services, especially in healthcare, pose significant challenges for Autistic individuals transitioning into adulthood.
- Policies are often income-based and fail to consider individual expenses, leading to ineligibility for crucial services.
- Disparities exist across regions regarding access to residential services and parental rights.



Part 2: Proposing Policy Solutions

In light of identified challenges, several policy solutions have been proposed to enhance support for Autistic individuals:

- Establishing policies that eliminate competition between service units and promote integrated healthcare systems.
- Implementing integrated communication plans within provinces to ensure consistency and accessibility of information.
- Increasing funding for services to meet the growing demand and diverse needs of Autistic individuals.
- Prioritizing mental health and [autism training](#) for police forces and professionals working with individuals and families.
- Ensuring equitable access to diagnostic services across the lifespan.
- Overhauling education curricula to promote inclusivity and support the success of all students.

Part 3: Prioritizing Solutions and Overcoming Resistance

In prioritizing solutions, considerations include ease of implementation and potential impact:

- Solutions emphasizing [universal design](#) and access for adult diagnoses are deemed to have significant impact and urgency.
- Education curriculum overhaul and [universal design](#) implementation emerge as top solutions with broad applicability and potential for transformative impact.

Part 4: Refining Solutions and Addressing Resistance

To refine proposed solutions and address potential resistance:

- Changes to diagnostic guidelines and equitable access to diagnostic services are recommended to ensure consistency and accessibility.
- Comprehensive training programs for diagnosticians, including family doctors, pediatricians, psychologists, and nurse practitioners, are essential to enhance diagnostic accuracy and accessibility.

In summary, addressing the identified challenges and implementing proposed solutions will require collaborative efforts from policymakers, service providers, and communities across the region to ensure equitable access to support services for Autistic individuals.

Ontario

Part 1: Evaluation of Current Policies and Programs

Assessment of existing public policies, programs, and supports for Autistic individuals in Ontario reveals a mix of successes and challenges.

Box 1. **Strengths**

- Positive aspects of the [Ontario Autism Program](#) include customizable funding options and the inclusion of various disciplines beyond Applied Behaviour Analysis.
- [Special Services at Home](#) and grants provide valuable support, although transparency in fund allocation needs improvement.
- Commitment to policy discussions and research, with ongoing committees responsive to family needs.
- Notable efforts in [employment support, pre-employment programs](#), and [school policies fostering inclusivity](#).
- Presence of advocacy groups and a cooperative approach among provincial organizations.

Box 2. **Challenges**

- Complex funding models and eligibility criteria hinder access, especially for non-English speakers.
- Inadequate coordination and transparency in fund allocation, leading to disparities and a lack of clarity.
- Insufficient adult services and support, with barriers to access and limited resources.
- Lack of integration and transparency in service provision, with disparities across regions.
- Issues with waitlists for essential services like speech-language pathology and occupational therapy.
- Gaps in education and employment support, with challenges in linking training programs to job opportunities.



- [Inadequate housing and accessibility accommodations for Autistic individuals](#).
- Limited representation of Autistic voices in policy-making processes.

Part 2: Proposing Policy Solutions

To address these challenges, several policy solutions have been proposed:

- Implement needs-based services with community-level assessment.
- Enhance transparency in data collection and fund allocation.
- Improve school system support with accessible learning assessments and mental health services.
- Prioritize long-term solutions and training for autism-related services.
- Expand autism-friendly spaces and crisis prevention initiatives in schools.
- Implement [autism education](#) for employers and provide training for public service professionals.
- Establish a provincial database for autism services and benefits.
- Support [transition services](#) for adults and provide funding for [social coaching programs](#).
- Incorporate Autistic representation at all levels of policy development.

Part 3: Prioritizing Solutions and Overcoming Resistance

Key solutions with high impact potential include education for employers, long-term support initiatives, and data transparency measures. Resistance to adoption may stem from concerns about funding allocation and resource management.

Part 4: Refining Solutions and Addressing Resistance

Refinement strategies include standardizing assessment processes, enhancing data collection methods, and promoting collaboration among stakeholders. Overcoming resistance requires clear communication and demonstration of the benefits of proposed solutions.



In summary, addressing the identified challenges and implementing proposed solutions will require collaborative efforts from policymakers, service providers, and communities across Ontario to ensure equitable access to support services for Autistic individuals.



Québec

Part 1: Evaluation of Current Policies and Programs

Our assessment of existing public policies, programs, and supports for Autistic individuals in Quebec has revealed both effective elements and challenges.

Box 1. **Strengths**

Several autism-related policies and programs have shown promise and strengths.

- Major investments in [school transitions](#) and [living environments](#) that foster autonomy while offering support are effective.
- Organizations like "[Autisme sans limites](#)" and "[Agape HEY](#)" have provided valuable services, such as employment support for Autistic adults and navigation assistance for parents, respectively.
- The 2021 document "[Pour une intégration des soins et des services pour les personnes ayant une déficience](#)" serves as a useful framework but requires updates.

Box 2. **Challenges**

- Access to subsidies for people with disabilities is often cumbersome, and provincial support is less robust compared to federal initiatives.
- Implementation of provincial funds lacks transparency, and there are inconsistencies in the application of policies. For instance, health services often focus solely on childhood needs, neglecting the adult population and creating a service vacuum in adulthood.
- There is a disconnect between autism conceptions and outdated policies, leading to insufficient mental health support and lengthy diagnosis wait times.



- The education system faces challenges with inclusion practices, with pressure to segregate Autistic students into special classes despite policies favoring integration.
- There is a lack of professional training in autism and multidisciplinary approaches, contributing to fragmented services and inefficient transitions between life stages.

Part 2: Proposing Policy Solutions

Several solutions have been proposed to enhance autism support:

- Autism Service Coordination Act: Introduce a [model similar to Prince Edward Island](#) to centralize and streamline autism services.
- New Provincial Position: Create a role dedicated to coordinating neurodevelopmental disability policies.
- Transition Coordination: Appoint coordinators to facilitate transitions for Autistic youth from school to higher education or employment.
- Developmental Agent and Employment Toolkit: Develop tools to support employment and developmental needs.

Also, various service enhancement solutions were mentioned:

- Relaxing Subsidy Requirements: Simplify access to financial support and clarify the application process.
- Standardization and Transparency: Ensure consistent service offerings and transparent funding mechanisms.
- Pan-Quebec Consultation: Foster collaboration between French and English-speaking communities to unify efforts.
- Education System Reforms: Review [models of inclusion](#) and explore flexible educational services, including part-time regular classes.
- Needs-Based Approach: Transition from diagnosis-based to needs-based services, making diagnosis non-mandatory and encouraging multidisciplinary evaluations.

Part 3: Prioritizing Solutions and Overcoming Resistance

The discussion highlighted several impactful solutions to support autistic individuals and their families. Key recommendations include authorizing part-time schooling, government-funded caregiver training, and the development of [social housing](#) with tailored support for needs and autonomy. Additionally, enhancing access to information and publicizing existing organizations and services are crucial. Implementing a comprehensive repository of resources, such as a [211 service](#), and establishing an autism service coordinator could streamline access to support. Another proposed measure is to hire a coordinator to facilitate the transition for autistic youth from school to higher education.

Adopting these solutions presents varying levels of feasibility for the government. Ongoing stakeholder training, including mandatory integrated training on inclusion and diversity, is relatively easy to implement and could significantly benefit the field. However, policies addressing the transition to adulthood for autistic individuals are limited and could face challenges in implementation. Despite these difficulties, these measures have the potential for significant impact on individuals and families, improving support and resources for autistic individuals across different life stages.

Part 4: Refining Solutions and Addressing Resistance

To enhance the proposed solutions, one key improvement is to develop an interactive website organized by region, featuring a comprehensive list of services, programs, and organizations. This website should include filters for easy navigation and a preliminary mapping phase to catalog existing services, populated and moderated by the public. A one-year deadline for the initial draft would incentivize participation and ensure timely updates. This approach would improve service delivery by identifying gaps and successful models for replication, thereby clarifying needs and refining direct services.



However, there are challenges in gaining government and decision-maker support for this initiative. It may not be immediately recognized as a priority, and public reception could be mixed. To address this, it is crucial to demonstrate the significant impact and essential nature of this first step. Additionally, scaling up the [“Autisme Sans Limites”](#) pilot project to 10 new sites by December 2025 could be a strategic move, but effectively communicating its benefits to the government will be key to securing support.

Overall, by addressing these areas, Quebec can make significant strides in improving autism supports, ensuring better services and quality of life for Autistic individuals and their families.

British Columbia

Part 1: Taking Stock - What is Working and What is Not Working?

The assessment of current autism policies in British Columbia reveals a mix of successes and challenges, highlighting both effective programs and areas needing improvement.

Box 1. **Strengths**

- Individualized and Direct Funding Models: These models have proven effective in providing tailored support to individuals with autism across different age groups ([family supports](#) or [adult supports](#)).
- [PEERS Program](#): Recognized for its success in promoting social skills development among youth and young adults on the spectrum, enhanced by encouraging authenticity and acceptance of autistic traits.
- [Quality Adult Programs](#): Existing programs serve as benchmarks for effective service delivery to adults on the spectrum.
- Lunch Mentors: A promising practice in schools aimed at supporting social interactions among students.

Box 2. **Challenges**

- [Pre-Kindergarten Programs](#): There is a need for expanded educational support, particularly in areas like Surrey, to train Educational Assistants and facilitate early intervention.
- [Inclusive Education Funding](#): While inclusion efforts are in place, inadequate funding poses a threat to sustainable support and accessibility.
- Age Restrictions in Funding: Funding limitations for children and youth up to 18 years old need extension to ensure continuity of support.
- Regulation of BCBA Professionals: Lack of regulatory status for BCBA professionals limits access through private insurance channels.
- Access to Diagnostic Services: Insufficient support for early identification programs in schools, hindering timely autism diagnoses.



Part 2: Generating Solutions - Sharing Ideas Big or Small to Improve Autism Policies

Discussions centered around proposing innovative solutions to enhance autism policies in British Columbia. Proposed solutions included:

- [Employment Equity Programs](#): Implementing programs that ensure equitable opportunities and advancement for individuals with autism in the workforce.
- Improved Mental Health Support Funding: Developing mechanisms to fund mental health supports tailored for adults on the spectrum.
- Accountability in Inclusion Funding: Ensuring schools allocate funds specifically towards supporting inclusive education practices.
- Cross-Ministerial Collaboration: Establishing a framework for inter-ministerial collaboration to enhance policy coherence and communication.
- Protected Leaves for Caregivers: Introducing protected leaves to support parents needing time off work for caregiving responsibilities.
- Access to \$10/Day Daycare: Making \$10/day daycare regulations inclusive of neurodiverse children to enhance accessibility.

Additional Recommendations:

- Evidence-Based Pilot Projects: Funding and supporting evidence-based pilot projects with assured continuation for effective programs.
- Long-Term Planning for Aging Population: Anticipating future needs of aging individuals with autism and planning support mechanisms accordingly.
- Data-Driven Decision Making: Committing to utilizing research data to inform policy decisions effectively.
- Transparent Community Engagement: Establishing mechanisms for community feedback and involvement in policy development and implementation.

Part 3: Prioritizing Solutions – Finding Your Winners

Participants identified key solutions with potential for significant impact and feasibility in adoption by the government.

Key Solutions Identified:

- Cross-Ministerial Framework: Creating a Disability Ministry linked with key ministries to foster collaboration and communication.
- Proactive Planning for Autism Prevalence: Developing proactive strategies to address the projected increase in autism prevalence.
- Employment Equity Programs: Establishing programs ensuring equitable employment opportunities and career advancement.
- [Accessibility of \\$10/Day Daycare](#): Modifying regulations to ensure neurodiverse children can access affordable daycare.
- Refining Individualized Funding Models: Improving the effectiveness of existing individualized funding models through refinement.
- Creation of a provincial autism plan

Part 4: Refining Solutions – Improving Your Winners

Suggestions were made to refine and improve the identified solutions to maximize their effectiveness and adoption.

Refinements Proposed:

- Creation of a Disability Ministry: Establishing a dedicated ministry focusing on disability issues to streamline policy efforts.
- Learning from [PEI](#) and [Australia](#): Drawing insights from successful disability policy frameworks implemented in other regions.
- Utilizing [BC Disability Collaborative](#): Leveraging existing collaborative platforms like the BC Disability Collaborative for inclusive policy development.

British Columbia's approach to autism policies shows promise with successful models like individualized funding and targeted programs. However, addressing challenges such as regulatory gaps, funding limitations, and inclusive education remains critical. By prioritizing collaborative frameworks, proactive planning, and evidence-based strategies, British Columbia can enhance support for Autistic people, promoting inclusivity and quality of life across the province.

Nunavut and Yukon

Part 1: Taking Stock - What is Working and What is Not Working?

Evaluation of existing public policies, programs, and supports for Autistic individuals in Nunavut and Yukon reveals a mix of strengths and challenges.

Box 1. **Strengths**

- [Autism Yukon's provision of sensory rooms](#) and community events.
- Collaborative agreements between the Departments of Education and Health in Yukon, facilitating professional mobility.
- In Nunavut, cultural underpinnings offer a sense of belonging within the community.

Box 2. **Challenges**

- Availability of clinicians for students with autism in Yukon.
- Human resource constraints impacting the [Yukon government's student support services](#).
- Non-inclusive workplaces in Nunavut hinder staff recruitment.
- Lack of broad representation of neurodevelopmental disabilities in [Nunavut's new Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Organization](#).
- Staffing disparities in Nunavut's disability society, raising questions of cultural representation.
- [Housing barriers affecting hiring in Nunavut](#), exacerbating Inuk versus newcomer inequalities.



Part 2: Generating Solutions - Sharing Ideas Big or Small to Improve Autism Policies

Several policy solutions have been proposed to address these challenges:

- Elimination of formal diagnosis requirements for support access.
- Enhanced training for educational staff and frontline workers on autism.
- Creation of sensory-friendly spaces and events.
- Strengthening cross-jurisdictional cooperation and collaboration.
- Awareness campaigns to build community understanding.
- Peer support-led capacity building for Autistic adults.
- Adoption of needs-based supports and universal design approaches.
- Engagement of self-advocates and stakeholders in policy development.
- Addressing intersectional identities and expanding diagnosis accessibility.

Part 3: Prioritizing Solutions – Finding Your Winners

Solutions with significant impact potential include [universal design](#) approaches, peer-to-peer networks, autism training, and increased transparency in decision-making. Adoption ease varies, with some solutions requiring extensive training or resource allocation.

Part 4: Refining Solutions – Improving Your Winners

Refinement strategies include incorporating policies for transparency in decision-making processes and making meetings and consultation processes freely accessible and recorded for public review. This ensures accountability and facilitates community engagement in policy development and implementation.

Virtual Groups (Across Regions)

Part 1: Taking Stock - What is Working and What is Not Working?

Evaluation of existing public policies, programs, and supports for Autistic individuals discussed within virtual groups reveals a series of challenges across Canada.

Box 1. Challenges

- Discontinuation of programs like [Wellness Together](#) and [Alberta Family Resource Centers](#).
- Proposals to expand existing programs without addressing specific autism needs.
- Long wait times for services, particularly in Quebec.
- Underfunding of Indigenous communities' access to autism services.
- Lack of autism-specific funding in Alberta and Ontario.
- Limited resources for Autistic adults.
- Diagnosis accessibility issues due to gaps in healthcare and school systems.
- Inaccessibility of information about standards and policies.
- Uninformed medical professionals regarding autism identification.
- Financial barriers to autism diagnosis.
- Lack of awareness and training among professionals and educators.
- Limited options beyond Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA).
- Insufficient training for police services in dealing with Autistic individuals.
- Lack of support and visibility for Autistic adults.
- Transparency and accountability gaps in existing policies.

Part 2: Generating Solutions - Sharing Ideas Big or Small to Improve Autism Policies

Policy solutions and research recommendations include:

- Shifting diagnosis eligibility criteria from medical to social models.
- Ensuring funding for autism diagnoses and broadening access.
- Training healthcare and allied professionals in autism recognition.
- Developing a neuro-affirming toolkit for professionals.
- Diversifying support options beyond just ABA.

- Allowing funding for married individuals with disabilities.
- Implementing autism training for police services.
- Creating a culture of safety for parents and teachers of Autistic students.
- Increasing funding for school social workers, counselors, and therapists.
- Establishing transparency and accountability mechanisms for policies.
- Conducting a systemic environmental scan to assess system effectiveness.

Part 3: Prioritizing Solutions – Finding Your Winners

Prioritized solutions include:

- Offering more educational support options beyond ABA.
- Implementing [neuro-affirming language](#) and education for professionals.
- Ensuring universal access and funding for autism diagnosis.
- Increasing support funding in schools.
- Establishing transparency and accountability mechanisms for policies.
- Conducting systemic environmental scans to assess system effectiveness.

Part 4: Refining Solutions – Improving Your Winners

Refinement strategies include:

- Autistic individuals leading training within academic programs.
- Creating regular in-service and professional development opportunities.
- Expanding training programs for professionals.
- Establishing an external organization for policy compliance oversight.
- Incorporating feedback from Autistic scholars.
- Involving the CRA to address funding administration challenges.
- Applying existing policies effectively in schools

Acknowledgements

This brief is the result of the discussions that occurred at CALS 2024. We want to thank all the participants and notetakers who came together to contribute and summarize this information. We want to thank Springboard Policy for facilitating this workshop.

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