



RESPONSE TO PETITION

Prepare in English and French marking 'Original Text' or 'Translation'

PETITION No.: **421-01346**

BY: **Ms. DZEROWICZ (DAVENPORT)**

DATE: **MAY 16, 2017**

PRINT NAME OF SIGNATORY: **MR. JOËL LIGHTBOUND**

Response by the Minister of Health

SIGNATURE

Minister or Parliamentary Secretary

SUBJECT

Health Care Services

ORIGINAL TEXT

REPLY

The Government of Canada recognizes that Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) has a significant and lifelong impact on Indigenous individuals and families. Federal investments in research, data improvements, and training skills are supporting those with autism and their families.

Our Government believes all children should have access to the same health, social and educational supports and services without gaps, delays or denials.

Through the Jordan's Principle: Child First Initiative, our Government is working side-by-side with First Nations, and the Provinces and Territories to make sure every child receives the service they deserve. The Child First Initiative was announced on July 5, 2016, to help meet the immediate health, social and educational services and support needs of First Nation children, while at the same time acquiring better knowledge about their needs.

Through this proactive Initiative, to-date, Canada has approved coverage for over 13,348 requests for health, social and educational services and supports needed, despite the First Nations child's health or social condition and place of residency. These requests include assessments for suspected autism and therapies for autistic children.

While our Government continues to address the immediate needs of First Nation children, information is also being collected to better inform the support structures currently in place. This includes looking at health gaps, assessing what is needed to address the gaps, directing investment to where it is needed, and providing lasting solutions by 2019, to ensure that all First Nations children enjoy the health they deserve.

In addition, between 2011-12 and 2015-16, the federal government invested \$39.4 million in research related to ASD through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. This investment contributes to the ongoing efforts to advance the research knowledge about the underlying causes of ASD and to translate this knowledge into better diagnostic tools and treatments for patients.

Finally, the Public Health Agency of Canada is working with Provinces and Territories to establish the National Autism Spectrum Disorder Surveillance System (NASS). The NASS will collect and track, over time, reliable information to: (1) estimate how many Canadians are living with these disorders (prevalence) and how many new cases are emerging (incidence); (2) describe the population of children and youth living with ASD in Canada; and (3) compare patterns within Canada and internationally. Where available and agreed upon with Provincial and Territorial partners, data on ethnicity for ASD cases will be collected and options to identify as Indigenous (unspecified), First Nations, Métis and Inuit are available.

Using data from the NASS, the first public report of ASD prevalence in Canada is planned for release in 2018. This initial report will not include ethnicity or any information on Indigenous children affected by ASD. However, plans moving forward are to include information on ethnicity for all ASD cases in the NASS surveillance system.

First Nations families with children who have an immediate need are encouraged to contact the Government of Canada via the general inquiries line at 1-800-567-9604 or visit the Jordan's Principle website at www.canada.ca/jordans-principle.