

News Release

Senators Jim Munson, Leo Housakos and Wanda Thomas Bernard



Senators discuss national autism strategy with federal health minister

Ottawa, December 14, 2017 – Senators Jim Munson, Leo Housakos and Wanda Thomas Bernard met with federal Health Minister Ginette Petitpas Taylor on Thursday, December 14 to make their case for a national autism strategy.

Senator Peter Harder, the Government Representative in the Senate, hosted the meeting.

The meeting took place after senators wrote an open letter to the minister asking to discuss how to move towards creating a national autism strategy.

Senators found Minister Petitpas Taylor to be very engaged and open to what they had to say.

In October, the Senate held an autism awareness campaign to mark the 10th anniversary of the Senate report *Pay Now or Pay Later: Autism Families in Crisis*. While the report has sparked a great deal of progress, a national autism strategy still has not been implemented.

Senator Munson has also introduced an autism-related inquiry in the Senate Chamber, which is a type of debate that allows senators to call attention to issues of interest to Canadians. Since then, more than a dozen senators have spoken about autism and the need for a national strategy.

Senators look forward to continuing to work with the health minister to achieve this important and worthwhile goal.

Quick Facts

- Approximately 1 out of every 68 Canadians has some form of autism.
- Autism spectrum disorder is the most common neurodevelopmental disorder diagnosed among children in Canada; its prevalence has increased by over 100% in the last 10 years.
- The unemployment rate for individuals with autism is over 80%.
- Early intervention can make a world of difference.

Quotes

“As senators we spoke with one voice and we left the meeting with renewed hope in our call for a national autism strategy.”

– Senator Jim Munson

“It's safe to say we left today's meeting feeling optimistic. I've invited the minister to visit Giant Steps and the Transforming Autism Care Consortium in Montreal to see the work they're doing and I look forward to arranging that.”

– Senator Leo Housakos

“Today’s meeting was very productive. I believe that Minister Petitpas Taylor heard our concerns and saw our motivation to work collaboratively on a national strategy for Canadian families living with autism spectrum disorder.”

– Senator Wanda Thomas Bernard

Associated Links

- Watch and listen to senators’ speeches during [the Senate’s autism awareness campaign](#).
- Read the report, [Pay Now or Pay Later: Autism Families in Crisis](#).
- Read [the senators’ open letter](#).
- Sign up for the Senate’s [eNewsletter](#).

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