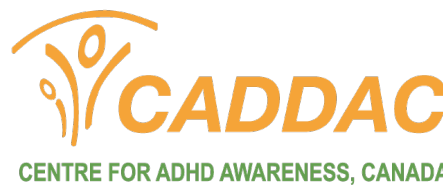


**Creating Equitable Access to ADHD  
Care in Canada: Written Submission for  
the Pre-Budget Consultations in  
Advance of the Upcoming Federal  
Budget**

**By:**

**CADDAC – The Centre for ADHD  
Awareness Canada and CADDRA - The  
Canadian ADHD Resource Alliance**



## **| Summary of Recommendations**

In summary, the Centre of ADHD Awareness Canada (CADDAC) and CADDRA - Canadian ADHD Resource Alliance would recommend that the federal and provincial levels of government work together to immediately implement the following aspects of [the Action Plan](#). Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is an under-recognized, underdiagnosed, and undertreated mental health issue in Canada, and it is time the government prioritize the treatment and support those with ADHD need.

**Pillar 1 – Empower families and individuals with resources and knowledge to better recognize and understand ADHD, and to access care.**

- Action 1 – Develop ADHD resources to help manage ADHD for individuals with ADHD and family members
- Action 2 – Provide equitable access to ADHD-trained MMHPs (Medical and Mental Health Practitioners)

**Pillar 2 – Educate medical and mental health practitioners (MMHPs) in an evidence-based approach to ADHD assessment, diagnosis, and treatment across the lifespan.**

- Action 1 - Require medical schools and other MMHP educational institutions to include ADHD as a clinical competency for practice licensure
- Action 2 – Ensure all MMHPs can access training and ongoing support in ADHD assessment and treatment

**Pillar 3 – Support educators with knowledge to better understand and support their students with ADHD**

- Action 1 – Ensure ADHD education is a curriculum requirement for all teacher training programs
- Action 2 – Equip educators with knowledge and resources to support students with ADHD and comorbid disorders

The Centre for ADHD Awareness Canada (CADDAC) and CADDRA - Canadian ADHD Resource Alliance have worked together over the past year to develop a concrete action plan for governments on moving forward with treating people living with ADHD. This action plan in its entirety can be found [here](#), but this submission will provide the Standing Committee on Finance with a high-level overview of the roadmap forward on ADHD care.

### **| What is ADHD**

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is one of the most common childhood psychiatric disorders in Canada. ADHD is a childhood onset neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by deficits in the regulation of attention and behaviour. Though it is childhood in onset, ADHD usually persists into adulthood, especially when it has been unrecognized in early years.

ADHD is common affecting all demographic and socioeconomic strata.

- 5 – 9 % of children and adolescents
- 3 – 5 % of adults
- As a chronic condition, only 15% of children with ADHD show remission of symptomatic and functional impairment in adulthood

**In national terms, approximately 2 million Canadians are affected.**

ADHD is an underlying cause of many comorbid psychiatric disorders (depression (38%), anxiety (47%), substance use (42.7%) and can lead to marked functional impairments. Individuals with ADHD have greater difficulty in academic and employment pursuits and experience greater difficulty maintaining healthy social and family relationships.

Yet ADHD is treatable, and much can be done to reverse the harm that it causes.

### **| Untreated ADHD is a Public Policy Problem**

In Canada, and globally, ADHD is under-recognized, underdiagnosed, and undertreated. Families struggle to access appropriate care for children. Adults face difficulties in obtaining treatment due to the lack of trained clinicians, and the mistaken belief that this is exclusively a childhood disorder.

The cost of untreated ADHD to the Canadian taxpayer is significant compared to the cost of effective treatment. While we lack specific data in a Canadian context, studies show that ADHD costs society hundreds of billions each year worldwide. A systematic review of 19 U.S. studies demonstrated that ADHD was associated with overall costs to the national economy ranging from \$143 billion to \$266 billion in terms of adult impairments. Costs borne by family members of individuals with ADHD ranged from \$33 billion to \$43 billion.<sup>1</sup> Extrapolation from American data suggests that Canada endures a sizeable cost from a disorder that can be managed.

### **| Investing in Solutions**

Fortunately, there are effective psychosocial and medical treatments which can greatly increase quality of life and productivity for those with ADHD at all ages. With the right strategic investments, governments have the capacity to improve education about ADHD, effect appropriate treatments and

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<sup>1</sup> Faraone, Stephen V., et al. "The world federation of ADHD international consensus statement: 208 evidence-based conclusions about the disorder." *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews* 128 (2021): 789-818.

contribute to the personal, academic and occupational success of individuals who experience impairment.

CADDAC and CADDRA have assembled **three pillars** for supporting people with ADHD:

### 1. Empower Families and Individuals

At the center of addressing untreated ADHD, individuals living with ADHD and their families must understand that ADHD is a common manageable neurodevelopmental condition. Awareness that there are treatment options and supports in the school system will encourage individuals to access care.

To address the lack of resources available to support individuals with ADHD and their families, CADDAC and CADDRA recommend the immediate development of parenting and skills-based programs.

Access to care by qualified medical and mental health care practitioners is the biggest obstacle. It is typical to have to wait over a year for an assessment in urban centres, even longer in more remote locations. Families and individuals need the commitment of government to improve access to this modality of health care. We also ask that screening of mental health challenges and academic functioning be part of every routine well child visit made to a child's primary care clinician to enable earlier recognition of ADHD and related disorders.

### 2. Educate Medical and Mental Health Practitioners

ADHD is often misunderstood by health care professionals in both specialty and primary care. A Canadian study found that nearly twice as many practitioners cited low comfort and skill in diagnosing ADHD compared to other psychiatric disorders. Most acknowledge that they were provided little if any education as to the management of ADHD during their professional training.

To address this, governments must ensure that ADHD is a required clinical competency to receive a license to practice for all medical and mental health care practitioners. Ongoing training and support that ensures competency in ADHD and other psychiatric disorders are a critical investment needed in our health care system.

### 3. Support Educators

Educators are unlikely to go a single day in their careers without interacting with an ADHD child.

School is difficult for students with ADHD, even those gifted with high intellect. Challenges experienced in the classroom and poor academic performance have a detrimental effect on one's motivation to pursue higher learning. Educators who can understand and guide these students to success are critical.

CADDAC and CADDRA recommend that governments and faculties of education work together to ensure that a robust training in ADHD is an essential part of the professional education of all teachers. Educators are increasingly aware of the mental health challenges of Canadian youth (anxiety, depression, substance use, etc.); understanding that ADHD is closely linked to many of these disorders and supporting its management could be lifechanging for the students entrusted to them.

## **|About CADDAC**

CADDAC is a national charity providing leadership in awareness, education, and advocacy for ADHD across Canada. CADDAC is committed to increasing the understanding of ADHD. Through generous donations, CADDAC's programs support parents and individuals affected by ADHD. Key programs and initiatives include CADDAC's Executive Functioning program, group coaching programs, resource navigator program, educational events, awareness initiatives and advocacy initiatives.

## **|About CADDRA**

CADDRA is a non-profit member-driven organization for medical, healthcare and research professionals with an interest in the field of ADHD. We promote best practices in research, assessment and treatment of ADHD. Our programs and events provide training and support to professionals in this area. CADDRA developed and updates the Canadian ADHD Practice Guidelines and has developed key clinical support tools and resources such as the ADHD Treatment Education and Assessment Tool (ADHD TrEAT) and ADHDLearn.