

## STATEMENT

### **Budget 2022 fails to support the needs of Canadians with FASD**

*(April 12, 2022)* For several months, the Canada Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Research Network (CanFASD) have been advocating for support to develop and implement a National FASD Strategy for Canada. The release of Federal Budget 2022 comes as a disappointment, as it fails to recognize the need for a strategy and does not even acknowledge the needs of Canadians with FASD.

FASD is the leading cause of neurodevelopmental disability in Canada, affecting 4% of the population – with rates being even higher in populations with compromised social determinants of health. With over 1.4 million Canadians with FASD today, there are more Canadians with FASD than autism, cerebral palsy, and Down syndrome combined. A lifelong disability, it has significant implications for physical and well-being, and Canadians with FASD struggle with a lack of diagnostics and formal supports.

“Canadians with FASD are still waiting to be acknowledged in a meaningful way by this government”, said Audrey McFarlane, Executive Director, CanFASD. “Recognizing that FASD is not only a health care issue – but intersects with homelessness, substance use, education, criminal justice, mental health, child welfare, social services, and more – the Network has been advocating for a National Strategy to better support the FASD community in Canada.”

Although Federal Budget 2022 includes some commitments that will positively impact our community, such as an employment strategy for persons with disabilities, funding to maintain trauma-informed, Indigenous led services to improve mental health and wellness, and funding to criminal legal aid services, Canadians with FASD and their families deserve to have access to concrete, individualized supports. Without these, the positive commitments in Federal Budget 2022 will only serve as piecemeal measures.

Today we are reiterating the call for a National FASD Strategy. Canada needs a coordinated, national, evidence-based approach to address FASD that provides leadership and builds on the work that has been already done at the provincial, regional and community levels. A National FASD Strategy would ensure that prevention is effective, respectful and addresses social determinants of health, while also provided for a coordinated approach to early and accurate diagnoses.

CanFASD remains committed to working with the federal government to leverage our current system with better coordination across Canada, to ensure that Canadians from coast-to-coast can access a continuum of quality supports throughout their lives.