

# NEWS RELEASE

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Autism Ontario's Response to the 2010 Ontario Budget**

**March 25, 2010 (Toronto, ON)** – It is a “no news” budget for the autism community this year. For the third year running, “autism” has not received mention in the provincial budget. While this does not mean that the provincial government has forgotten about the needs of the autism community, it's not apparent that we will see any improvements in the currently unacceptable situations of service wait-lists and insufficient of supports for the adult population.

While not specifically geared to the autism community, there are a couple of interesting items to note in the *2010 Ontario Budget*. The first is the announcement of 20,000 new post-secondary spots for any qualified Ontario adult who wants to go to college or university. Will the definition of “qualified” include students with special needs who might be academically ready but socially unprepared for a post-secondary education? Will there be additional supports available to assist these students to become active participants in their school community?

The second is the announcement of an entity called the Ontario Online Institute. According to the budget document it “will bring the best professors from Ontario's post-secondary institutions into the home of those who want to pursue higher learning” (pg. 7). This is an encouraging development that will provide additional options for learning for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) who might not be best suited to learning in a formal classroom setting.

The previously announced full day learning for 4 and 5 year olds, which will roll out in 600 schools in September 2010 with full implementation by 2015/2016, featured prominently throughout the document. Again, what is missing is any mention of additional supports for students with special needs to attend full day learning - not just supports for those transitioning from the Autism Intervention Program, but supports for other young students-to-be who are still on waitlists.

This budget provides a one per cent increase in benefits (specifically the adult basic-needs allowances and maximum shelter allowances) for those receiving Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), Ontario Works, Temporary Care Assistance, and Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities. The document notes that “Total children's and social services sector funding is projected to increase by \$1.6 billion from 2009-2010 to 2012-2013. This is primarily due to increased expenses in social assistance, the Ontario Child Benefit and developmental services to cushion the effect of the recession on families and communities” (pg. 122). There is no further detail on how the increased funding will benefit individuals and families dealing with ASD. As with most of the document, this section is vague.

## Autism Ontario -

Overall, while there were no surprises in this budget, there also was not a whole lot of detail. Although positive steps have been taken to treat, educate and support some individuals with ASD, with prevalence rate of 1 in 125 individuals diagnosed (applied to population rates in Ontario – it would mean over 80,000 people in Ontario with ASD), the current level of financial investment for our most vulnerable citizens is unacceptable. Ontario must continue to increase funding and capacity to treat and support individuals with ASD in the early years, the school years and into adulthood - across the lifespan.

For more information or to view our public service announcements, visit our website at [www.autismontario.com](http://www.autismontario.com). Since 1973, Autism Ontario has been the voice for families of children and adults with ASD through Chapters in most communities across Ontario.

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