

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Toronto, Ontario, August 24, 2016



“Nowhere to Turn” Report Affirms Crisis in Ontario for Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and their Families

Over the past 4 years, the Ontario Ombudsman has received an unprecedented number of complaints from families in crisis, watching services and supports for their family members living with autism and other developmental disabilities disappear on their 18th birthday. “The Minister apologized to the individuals and their families who have endured such hardships when the System, especially MCSS’ failure to provide adequate and appropriate services suitable to their needs,” noted Howard Weinroth, parent of an adult with ASD and OPAAA member.

Autism Ontario, its Chapters and the Ontario Partnership for Adults with Aspergers and Autism (OPAAA) regularly hear anguished reports from weary families having to abandon their adult children on the doorsteps of a system unprepared to meet their needs. “From a parent’s perspective, I’m glad to see the Ombudsman has applied clarity and focus on the issues faced by families navigating the developmental services landscape in the province,” said Elizabeth Hunter, OPAAA member and parent of two adults with ASD. “Clearly there is much work to be done to ensure that families don’t find themselves in crisis. I am hopeful that this will lead to better processes and systems for all adults diagnosed with ASD, not just those eligible for access to Developmental Services Ontario (DSO).”

OPAAA is thrilled to hear the depth of understanding of the issues from the Ombudsman, and the Ontario Government’s acknowledgment of the challenges faced by people with ASD and developmental disabilities. However, the numbers of people diagnosed with ASD in Ontario continues to grow, and the needs of our community cannot be addressed by MCSS alone. Margaret Spoelstra, OPAAA Co-chair remarked: “The report’s acknowledgment of the needs of high functioning adults with autism affirms that our voices have been heard. But many more Ministries need to be engaged to respond to more complex needs, including mental health needs”.

As a society, we’ve agreed that institutions are not acceptable solutions for individuals living with developmental disabilities. However, full community inclusion will necessitate additional investment of resources, and expertise. Until there is full entitlement to services in the community for people with ASD and developmental disabilities, success in addressing the problems identified in this report will remain elusive.

“It was encouraging to hear our long-held concerns about the state of disarray in developmental services, echoed by the Ombudsman in today’s report,” Dr. Kevin Stoddart, OPAAA Co-chair said. “Individuals with developmental disabilities and autism have a right to better care and supports. We are looking forward to working with MCSS in the days ahead to ensure that the recommendations become a reality, and are informed by clinical and family expertise.”

Who is OPAAA: Since 2006 the Membership of OPAAA has represented the largest collective group of service providers and advocates in Ontario that have a specific focus on the needs of adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and their families. To learn more about OPAAA, and the work we do, please [click here](#).



OPAAA Members:

- Autism Ontario: Margaret Spoelstra, Executive Director, OPAAA Co-chair
- The Redpath Centre: Dr. Kevin Stoddart, Director, OPAAA Co-chair
- Autism Speaks Canada: Jill Farber, Executive Director
- Geneva Centre for Autism: Debbie Irish, CEO
- Kerry's Place Autism Services: Isabel Meharry, Interim CEO
- Woodview Mental Health and Autism Services: Robin Brennan, Director Autism Services
- Elizabeth Hunter, Niagara, Parent
- Evguenia Ignatova, Student Representative
- Ginny Pearce, Toronto, Parent
- Howard Weinroth, Toronto, Parent

CONTACT:

Jeff Bomben
Communications Coordinator
416-246-9592 ext. 232
jeff at autismontario dot com

What you need to know about services and supports for adults with ASD in Ontario

1. Ontario Partnership for Adults with Asperger's and Autism (OPAAA) [Response to Patients First: A Proposal to Strengthen Patient-Centred Health Care in Ontario](#) -2016
2. Diversity in Ontario's Youth and Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders: Complex Needs in Unprepared Systems - [Executive Summary](#) – 2014
3. The Ministry of Community and Social Service (MCSS) Partnership Table report highlighting the serious problem regarding housing supports and services for adults with developmental disabilities in Ontario and offering productive solutions - [Ending the Wait](#) – 2013
4. Autism Ontario's presentation to the Government of Ontario's Select Committee on Developmental Services - [Closing the Gaps](#) – 2013
5. Autism Ontario's report highlighting no consistent government policy regarding the need for supports and services for adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) - [Forgotten](#) - 2008