



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Toronto, Ontario, February 24, 2017

The Ministry of Community and Social Services' Six-Month Report Back to the Ombudsman. Are they listening?

Six months after the release of the Ontario Ombudsman's report "Nowhere to Turn", greater choice, flexibility, inclusion and inter-ministerial partnerships now drive some of the newest MCSS initiatives to address crisis involving adults with Developmental Disabilities in Ontario.

Three years ago, the Ontario Ombudsman received an unprecedented amount of complaints from families in crisis watching the services and supports for their children on the spectrum disappear on their 18th birthday. Unfortunately, these devastating stories continue to play out across our province. Autism Ontario and our Chapters hear anguished details from devastated families having to abandon their adult children on the doorsteps of a system unprepared to meet their needs; grieve the death of those most vulnerable; call the police to help a loved one in distress; choose medical restraints at the hospital because of lack of support.

Autism Ontario continues to be part of this collective outcry, recognizing how disheartened families were by the MCSS response to the [Select Committee Final Report](#) that **downplayed the crisis in Developmental Services Ontario and instead, shifted focus to processes and programs which were already in play.**

In response to these devastating stories, the Ontario Ombudsman released "[Nowhere to Turn](#)" in August of 2016, which outlined their investigation into the Ministry of Community and Social Services' response to situations of crisis involving adults with developmental disabilities. Six months after the release of this report, the Ministry of Community and Social Services has [responded](#) with their first update about how they plan to transform developmental services for adults in Ontario.

Autism Ontario knows that community participation, inclusion and integration continue to be key components to addressing the housing crisis. We are encouraged to see outlined in their response a series of housing pilots and projects developed in collaboration with individuals, their families and community partners.

In addition to collaborative housing options, it is also important to note the inter-ministerial partnerships, specifically with the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care exploring some of the longer-term housing options. Addressing the housing needs of individuals with ASD does

not fit entirely within the domain of the Ministry of Community and Social Services. Inter-ministry collaborations such as those undertaken by the Ministry to target specific disadvantaged populations are needed and we are encouraged to note that MCSS has recognized this.

"Individualized, person-centred residential support is only part of the picture. Times of crisis call for an infrastructure that supports quick, appropriate action. While every solution does not lie within the Ministry of Community and Social Services, it is their responsibility - as arbiters of this vulnerable population - to ensure the necessary supports are in place regardless of where funding comes from. The sometimes unpredictable nature of crises, and the associated stress on families that comes along with knowing this reality, requires a multi-faceted safety net. These housing projects are a step in the right direction, but more tangible action (on a much broader scale) is required if this government intends to have a meaningful impact for individuals on the spectrum and their families"

Joseph McDonald, sibling

While the work underway is encouraging, the issues extend well beyond housing. As it stands, caregivers continue to burn out as their loved ones sit on waitlists for non-existent resources; often then transitioning into a crisis-driven system unprepared to meet their needs. Ontario must be prepared to provide options for adults on the spectrum that are individualized, flexible, and responsive to changing developmental trajectories.

About Autism Ontario: Autism Ontario has a 43 year history of representing thousands of families and people with ASD across Ontario. We are the only organization in Ontario that has formal parent representation in all areas of the province through our 25 Chapters. We advocate on behalf of all people with ASD and their families – at all ages and stages of life, reflecting a wide range of expression and abilities. To connect with us, visit www.autismontario.com

Vision: Acceptance and Opportunities for all people with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Mission: To ensure that each individual with ASD is provided the means to achieve quality of life as a respected member of society.

CONTACT:

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