



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Autism Ontario Responds to the 2019 Ontario Budget

Autism Ontario is committed to supporting families through this province-wide program change

Ontario's first Progressive Conservative government in 15 years presented its [budget for the 2019-20 fiscal year](#) today, giving families with autistic loved ones a solid idea of the autism-specific funding to expect from the province for the next four years.

Outlined in today's budget was the previously announced government plan to eliminate the waitlist for children and youth on the autism spectrum, including the enhanced announced reforms to ASD services and supports. As the new Ontario Autism Program rolls out, Autism Ontario is grateful to play a role in supporting Ontario families in navigating local services. With the province's commitment to community consultations that include diverse professional voices, and those of adults with lived experience, and with the government's commitment to working across key ministries and what we hope will be a movement towards non-siloed and effective approaches to autism supports across the lifespan, we hope the autism community will get closer to creating the kind of system that meets the varied needs of children and youth on the spectrum and their families.

Unaddressed in the 2019 Ontario Budget are the Ontario Government plans to support Special Education students, including those on the autism spectrum, in their classrooms. There are references to public consultations, which is positive, and a commitment to preserve education. We will await details as to how these commitments will impact autistic students or educational supports within school settings.

For Ontario's Autistic adults, the government announced a redesign of the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) to consolidate complex supplements and benefits into simplified financial support for people with severe disabilities. ODSP continues to be the largest source of income for people on the autism spectrum, and it is imperative it remain barrier-free. For underemployed Autistic adults, the Province of Ontario has committed to integrating employment supports from social assistance with Employment Ontario to improve outcomes. Removing as many barriers as possible to employment for Autistic individuals is part of the solution; the other part is creating supportive employment environments.

We know that housing options for autistic individuals must be tailored to meet a variety of needs. Everyone needs a home. The right home can mean an overall better quality of life for someone on the autism spectrum. We're encouraged to see our Government recognize that the

current supportive housing system is difficult for people to navigate and does not effectively address the unique needs of individuals. For some people, the waitlist for appropriate housing is 20+ years, and currently, there are over 14,000 Ontarians with developmental disabilities, including ASD, waiting for appropriate housing. We're pleased to see the 2019 Ontario Budget outline a commitment to improve the flexibility of the housing system through a comprehensive review.

Other interesting notes in the budget that we will be waiting to hear more about include the CARE tax credits "up to \$8,250 per child with a severe disability"(p.100); whether "investments focused on increasing front-line care delivery...at home"(p.113) to address "Hallway Health Care" will turn into better community-based care for many people with developmental disabilities, including autism, currently living in costly hospital settings; whether the proposed investment in mental health treatments (p.122) will translate into mental health supports for people with dual-diagnoses; and what "efficiencies to be implemented" will mean for "evidence-based sector transformation in developmental services"(p.278).

While there are many details in this budget that remain to be seen, there are important commitments made to support autistic children, youth and their families. However, because ASD changes over time – in its expression, challenges and delights – Ontario must be prepared to support children, youth and adults within the context of development, learning, family and community. Ontario must build supportive, understanding and inclusive communities to ensure that each person with ASD is provided the means to achieve quality of life as a respected member of society.

About Autism Ontario: Autism Ontario has a 46-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.

New to Autism? Find help for navigating the system after a diagnosis, school issues, and other ASD information; please contact us [here](#).

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