



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Toronto, Ontario, July 29, 2019

The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services announces focus on needs-based Ontario Autism Program

Autism Ontario is committed to supporting families through this province-wide program change and will work with the members of the Autistic community, caregivers and professionals to find solutions to this process.

Today, after listening to service providers and families in various areas across the province, Minister Todd Smith announced the Ontario Autism Program would focus on creating needs-based programming and services by April 2020. This has been a direction families have been asking for since the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services previously announced Childhood Budgets and a shift towards ASD fee-based services.

In addition to including more meaningful and sustainable support, Minister Smith has expanded the original scope of the Advisory Panel. The panel will now consider relevant quantitative and qualitative data and focus on evidence-based interventions and supports for children and families by the end of summer. It is our hope that with the task and scope of the Advisory Panel expanding, 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.

In our pre-budget consultation presentation delivered to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs in January, we strongly recommended collaboration across Ministries with the emphasis on the child's learning and mental health needs over siloed systems. Seeing both the Minister of Education and the Minister of Health at this announcement is a step in the right direction. In addition to ministerial collaboration, expansion of the Ontario Autism Program's Advisory Panel purview to be able to take a more holistic view of the definition of needs will contribute to the development of a responsive and sustainable program.

Susan Morris, President, Autism Ontario Board of Directors

We continue to message that the efficacy and success of our autism programming must not fall solely on the shoulders of children's programming. To support people on the spectrum, we need a commitment across all ministries, including adult services, education, health, mental

health, post-secondary, and employment sectors. Without this, families will continue to struggle for support and our society will continue to fail Autistic people and their families across their lifespan. We were encouraged to see the Minister of Health and the Minister of Education present at today's announcement.

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.

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