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For immediate release

Autism Ontario Celebrates 50 Years at Ripley's Aquarium

[Toronto, Ontario] Autism Ontario celebrated a momentous occasion with an extraordinary event at Ripley's Aquarium in honour of its 50th anniversary. The event, held on November 4th, witnessed an incredible turnout, with nearly 1,600 enthusiastic attendees, including 30 Autism Ontario staff members, who all embraced and enjoyed this memorable experience.

Among the distinguished guests in attendance were Mayor Olivia Chow and the Honourable Michael Parsa, who provided speeches and added to the excitement of the day.

"Congratulations to 50 years of success — 50 years of supporting families, children, and youth in our province," expressed Minister Michael Parsa. "We will work with wonderful partners such as [Autism Ontario] — partners who were there from the beginning with the new program that ...has been expanded to provide more support and services to individuals and families across the province. Thank you to each and every one of you that is making a difference in everybody's life."

Mayor Olivia Chow addressed the significance of autism inclusivity and underscored the importance of robust support systems by sharing a compelling story about River Christie-White. Her words illuminated River's triumphant journey, emphasizing his resilience in overcoming various challenges. "Thanks to the community Autism Ontario has built, and thanks to the connection [River's] mom was able to make with the organization, River's confidence built. He was spreading awareness of not only autism but also the importance of inclusiveness for all. I can't thank [the community] enough for all that you do. I talk a lot about a Toronto where everyone belongs, but I look around here, and already, everyone feels they belong. Let's work together to make our city a lot stronger and a lot better. Let's build a city where everyone feels they belong."

Ripley's Aquarium opened its doors exclusively to Autism Ontario's families, providing them with a unique and cherished experience. Autism Ontario extends its heartfelt gratitude to Ripley's Aquarium for their generosity in granting families hours of delight, along with complimentary tickets to join Autism Ontario in celebration.

This monumental event signifies not only the rich history of Autism Ontario but also the bright future of the community ahead. As Autism Ontario commemorates its 50th anniversary, it celebrates the progress that has been made in supporting and advocating for autistic individuals and their families. The 50th anniversary is a testament to Autism Ontario's ongoing commitment to making a difference in the lives of those in the autism community.

"We are profoundly grateful for the collective contributions that made the day at Ripley's Aquarium a truly unforgettable celebration of Autism Ontario's 50th anniversary," expresses Margaret Spoelstra, Autism Ontario's Chief Executive Officer. "Autism Ontario was started by families, just like those who joined us on November 4th. This event marked the largest gathering

of autistic individuals and their families in Ontario, which is certainly a testament to our shared journey. To Ripley's, our hearts overflow with gratitude. As we persist in our mission of 'Best world, better life, making autism matter,' we find the magic of this endeavor magnified by the contributions of partners like Ripley's Aquarium."

Autism Ontario looks forward to continuing its journey, in collaboration with the autism community, to create a world of inclusivity and support. Autism Ontario extends further gratitude toward everyone who joined in its 50th celebration and contributed to the event's success.

ABOUT AUTISM ONTARIO

[Autism Ontario](#) is the province's leading source of information and referral on autism whose mandate is to build a supportive and inclusive Ontario for autism. It provides autistic individuals and families across their life course with community-based access to meaningful supports, social learning opportunities, information, and connections. The organization's commitment to significantly and positively impacting the autism community is driven by its vision: Best life, better world, making autism matter!