

## **Autism Ontario Shares Widespread Concerns From Students and Families Regarding New Support Offices and Passage of Bill 33**

**November 21, 2025**  
*For immediate release*

**[Toronto, Ontario]** The Ontario government announced last week that all school boards in Ontario will be required to establish new Student and Family Support Offices by September 1, 2026. The stated purpose of this initiative is to provide parents and guardians with a better way of communicating with their school boards. Autism Ontario is deeply troubled by the lack of details on how these new offices will support the needs of students who receive special education services or students with disabilities and the lack of meaningful engagement with key stakeholders.

Recent legislative changes have raised similar concerns with the fast-tracked passage of Bill 33 that will give the Education Minister more power over school boards. While the stated intention of Bill 33 is to increase transparency and accountability within school boards, we share widespread concerns from students and families that the bill's centralization of power under the Education Minister could ultimately weaken the voices the school boards are meant to represent. Broad ministerial authority over board investigations, policies, finances, and even school naming risks limiting the influence of local trustees, Special Education Advisory Committees (SEACs), and the families and students they serve.

It is unclear how these changes will impact the diverse needs of students to ensure they have access to high-quality, effective, and safe services. This is particularly concerning given that over 350,000 students from junior kindergarten through grade 12 – or one in every six students – receive special education programs and services.<sup>1</sup>

It is also unclear how the new offices and ministerial powers, once in place, will work under the *Education Act* with school board trustees and SEACs. Autism Ontario has volunteer representatives on SEACs with school boards across the province. Our volunteers serve as a trusted voice for autistic students and their families, bringing forward priorities and concerns from the autism community. They play a key role in advising on school board policies and helping students and families address issues in a timely and collaborative manner.

Autism Ontario welcomes initiatives aimed at increasing academic achievement, well-being, and necessary resources for students, families, and school teams. However, these strategies must be grounded in evidence, transparency, and accountability and should enable thoughtful decision-making that is responsive to local circumstances and community needs.

Meaningful participation, input, and collaboration from students, families, school teams, and organizations like Autism Ontario are crucial to effectively serving students. We strongly encourage our provincial leaders to invite key stakeholders to have a seat at the table to discuss any initiative directly affecting students and their families to ensure that we continue to work towards creating a supportive and inclusive Ontario for autism.

**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!

For more information, please email Autism Ontario’s Media Team at [media@autismontario.com](mailto:media@autismontario.com).

[Make a meaningful donation today](#). Your support makes a difference.

**References**

<sup>1</sup> Province of Ontario, 2023–24 Education funding: a guide to the Special Education Grant <https://www.ontario.ca/page/2023-24-education-funding-guide-special-education-grant#>.