

Autism Ontario Sees Both Progress and Gaps in Ontario's 2026 Budget

[Toronto, ON] – Ontario's Minister of Finance has presented the province's [budget for the 2026-27 fiscal year](#). In closely reviewing the budget for items intended to improve the lives of autistic children and adults, as well as their families, Autism Ontario sees reasons for both hope and concern.

Autism Ontario is pleased with the additional investment in the Ontario Autism Program (OAP). "We recognize the financial and emotional stress on families resulting from long waits for core clinical services for their autistic children," says Marg Spoelstra, CEO of Autism Ontario, "so we are thrilled to see an increase of \$186 million for the OAP; and we look forward to learning the details of this investment as well as the government's strategy to ensure all autistic children have timely and equitable access to evidence-informed core clinical services."

Funding for special education in the budget appears to be limited to maintained investments for resources to help students with special education needs to navigate the school system. The government has focused its school funding through an investment of more than \$41 million over the next three years to offer School Resource Officer (SRO) programs. Autism Ontario provided cautionary [written submissions to the Ministry of Education](#) in February 2026 regarding its proposed SRO program regulation. Unaddressed in the 2026 Ontario budget are the government's plans to support students who receive special education services in their classrooms.

We are encouraged to see the government dedicate \$53 million over 3 years to expand supportive housing for vulnerable populations and enhance access to critical mental health services and housing supports, including 425 additional supportive housing units. This appears to be responsive to the [Ontario Ombudsman's November 2025 report, "Lost in Transition"](#), which details how systemic gaps between Ontario ministries force adults with developmental disabilities, including autism, into prolonged, harmful hospitalizations. The investigation prompted 24 recommendations to the government for improved inter-ministerial collaboration and specialized community housing.

Autism Ontario has been closely monitoring the government's response to the report and is eager to support further implementation of the recommendations.

Autism Ontario celebrates the lofty investment of \$407 million over three years for community groups and supports for individuals with developmental disabilities, as well as for survivors of gender-based violence or human trafficking. A much-needed investment of an incredible \$1.1 billion over three years to connect more patients with home care services could also benefit the many autistic people in Ontario who have complex medical needs and require access to care and nursing services in their homes.

Finally, we also see the potential to positively impact autistic people, who experience barriers to accessing health care, with the government's investment in the province's Primary Care Action Plan and on the clinical training of registered nurses to provide families with better access to health care. While many details in this budget remain to be seen, there are important commitments made to support autistic children, adults, and their families. We remain optimistic about Ontario's dedication to building welcoming, supportive and inclusive communities to ensure that each autistic person has a sense of dignity and belonging throughout their lives.

For more information, please email Autism Ontario's Media Team at media@autismontario.com.

References:

2026 Ontario Budget | A Plan to Protect Ontario. <https://budget.ontario.ca/2026/index.html>

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Lost in transition. (2025b, December 4). Ombudsman Ontario.
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