



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Toronto, Ontario, March 21, 2019

Autism Ontario Responds to Ministry Announcement “Ontario Enhancing Support for Children with Autism”

The enhancements to the proposed Ontario Autism Program reflect a shift in programming as families across Ontario are fighting to be heard

Today’s announcement by the Ministry of Children Community and Social Services announced several developments to the proposed Ontario Autism Program after weeks of protests, social media campaigns, and public outcry from parents and professionals. This announcement tells us that the Ontario Government is paying attention to what families have to say.

Gone from the proposed Ontario Autism Program is the income testing for childhood budgets. While the age cap remains, families will no longer experience a reduction in funding based on household income. Children under the age of six will receive \$20,000 annually in direct funding, while those six and over will receive \$5,000 annually. Since funding will no longer be impacted by family income it is still important to note that the childhood budgets are far below what many families have already personally invested. The funding a family receives is also still based on age, as opposed to needs, something families and professionals have pointed to as a critical flaw in the program.

Families will have access to a larger range of eligible services through the childhood budgets now. Families have been vocal in asking for Occupational and Speech and Language Pathology services and their inclusion in the eligible services reflects the Ministry is paying attention. Giving families access to a broader range of services is a step in the right direction.

What is most encouraging from this announcement is that the Ministry is committed to exploring how best to provide additional supports to families based on the diagnosed needs of their child. Autism Ontario believes in the importance of broad consultation, and hopes these meetings don’t include a select few, but a diverse range of perspectives, including the voices of Autistic adults, families, scientists, clinicians, community members, educators, and thought leaders. Let’s get this right. To get this right, we need to have a wholistic perspective which also addresses inclusion, education, employment, health, mental health and supportive communities - everything our province needs to support people on the spectrum at all ages and all stages of development and life.

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 your local **Family Support Coordinator** [here](#).

CONTACT:

Jeff Bomben, Communications Coordinator 416-246-9592 ext. 232
jeff at autismontario dot com