



## Ontario Investing in Autism Services to Better Serve Children and Families in Durham Region

DURHAM REGION — The Ontario government is investing more than \$37 million over the next two years in 100 public and private autism service providers across the province to help more children and families access clinical services in the Ontario Autism Program. The following organizations in the Durham Region are receiving unding:

- Grandview Children's Centre will be receiving a total of \$400,000 which will be distributed up to a maximum of \$200,000 this year and next.

- Lake Ridge Community Support Services will be receiving a total of \$391,135 which will be distributed up to a maximum of \$195,568 this year and next.

- Progressive Steps Training and Consultation Inc will be receiving a total of \$400,000 which will be distributed up to a maximum of \$200,000 this year and next.

"Our government is committed to supporting children with autism and their families — and I'm proud to see that commitment turning into action," said Lorne Coe, MPP for Whitby and Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security, and Children, Community

and Social Services. "Our investments here in Durham Region and throughout Ontario will help autism service providers build and retain a stable, skilled teams that will allow more families to access the services they need close to home."

Service providers are receiving funding through the Ontario Autism Program's workforce capacity fund. This fund provides two-year grants ranging from \$50,000 to \$400,000 in value to help providers to hire new staff, increase staff hours, train employees, invest in technology, and reach rural and remote communities. LRCSS is thrilled to be selected for the Expansion WFCG. This funding presents an exciting opportunity to address a vital gap in services for Autistic adolescents facing mental health challenges in our community. With support from this grant, we will provide specialized training for our team and develop an evidence-based clinical skills curriculum. This will empower us to better support these youth in building meaningful skills and thriving in their everyday lives.

- Renee Hacker, Clinical Director, Lake Ridge Community Support Services

This significant investment allows Progressive Steps to expand our team of qualified professionals while upholding the clinical excellence that families trust us to deliver.

Building on our success with previous workforce capacity funding—which, in partnership with Durham College, enabled us to provide services to families at no cost—we're committed to using these resources to reduce wait times without compromising the ethical, evidence-based care that defines our practice.

- Kerry-Anne Robinson, Clinical Director, Progressive Steps Training and Consultation Inc.

"This high-impact investment from the Ontario Autism Program's workforce capacity fund is a meaningful step toward improving access, reducing delays and enhancingbehaviour program and service offerings for the children, youth and families we serve.

With this funding, we will increase the size of our Behaviour Services team, streamlineservice access and improve our training and onboarding processes. Most importantly, it means more children and youth with developmental needs and their families in Durham Region will receive the time-

ly, high-quality support they deserve."

- Tom McHugh, CEO, Grandview Kids

"Protecting Ontario starts by safeguarding the province's most vulnerable and ensuring that all children are provided with opportunities to achieve lifelong success," said Michael Parsa, Minister of Children, Community and Social Services. "Autism service providers do an incredible job of helping children and youth reach their full potential. Our government is proud to work with them to make it easier for more families to access timely, local supports tailored to their needs."

Funding for local service providers through the workforce capacity fund is part of the province's total investment in the Ontario Autism Program. Since 2019, Ontario has more than doubled the program's annual budget, bringing it to a total of \$779 million with the addition of a \$175 million investment through Budget 2025. This new investment will continue to support the enrolment of children and youth in core clinical services.

The workforce capacity fund is one initiative under the OAP capacity action plan. The province prioritizes applications that support

families and service providers in northern, rural and remote communities, as well as francophone and Indigenous families recognizing the unique challenges these groups face.

- Workforce capacity fund grants awarded in 2022 and 2023 supported providers to: serve an additional 6,000 children and youth on the autism spectrum, boost training for more than 2,000 staff and fund more than 500 clinician positions.

- The Ontario Autism

Program has served tens of thousands of children and youth with autism aged 0-17 through multiple streams in the program, including caregiver-mediated early years programs, the entry to school program, foundational family services, core clinical services and urgent response services.

- Since the workforce capacity fund was created in 2021, Ontario has awarded more than 350 grants in total to autism service providers across the province.



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