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937/21

The Hon. Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
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Toronto ON M7A 1A1
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CII

Sent by E-Mail

June 24, 2021

Re: Support for Autistic Adults

The following resolution was passed by Ajax Town Council at its meeting held June 21, 2021:

WHEREAS an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) diagnosis is a neurodiverse condition that applies to an estimated 135,000 Ontarians, characterized by differences in the way that the individual communicates and relates to the world around them. As the word “spectrum” suggests, ASD impacts and challenges each individual differently, and in some cases includes co-occurring health concerns;

AND WHEREAS included on the ASD continuum are people at three different “levels”, defined in relation to the amount of specialized supports and interventions they require to live independently, or participate in a neurotypical context. People labelled as level 3 require very substantial support. Often, persons identified as level 3 are not able to communicate verbally, can be impacted by extreme anxiety and rigidity in their routines, and are prone to severe emotional dysregulation, distress, violence and self-injuring behaviours, which cause tremendous safety concerns;

AND WHEREAS parents of people diagnosed with ASD, and specifically for those impacted by a level 3 diagnosis, report “glaring gaps in the supports available, especially for autistic adults, people with lower incomes, people in rural areas, and Black, Indigenous and people of colour.” (Autism Ontario);

AND WHEREAS specifically, once a person turns 18, they typically lose access to most ASD government funding and services, which are largely geared toward children. Some of the most significant gaps in supports include long wait times and inaccessible or unaffordable respite care and housing. Group homes are often the best and safest living environments for people with level 3 ASD. A group home setting can offer 24-hour care, firm routine, access to social workers and other care providers, as well as appropriate supervision for social interactions and outings that working parents simply cannot provide. The need for appropriate and timely care has been highlighted and exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic;

AND WHEREAS over 14,000 individuals (and growing) with ASD are on waitlists for affordable housing (CBC, 2020), and individuals receiving funding from the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) do not receive enough money to sustain access to private group

home accommodations. The maximum single rate for ODSP in 2020 was \$1,169/month (\$14,028), compared to the cost of private group home living at \$90,000/year, and parents are often financially unable to bridge the gap while providing necessities for themselves and other family members;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

1. Ajax Council calls on the Province of Ontario to increase the supply of affordable, supportive housing and respite care options for both children and adults diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder, equipped with access to wrap-around services, and prioritized by need;
2. Ajax Council requests that the Province of Ontario consider increasing the Ontario Disability Support Program allocations to provide individuals and families with more housing options for adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder;
3. That Ajax Council calls on the federal government to expedite the development of a National Autism Strategy; and
4. This motion be distributed to the Hon. Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario, the Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy, Minister of Finance, the Hon. Merrilee Fullerton, Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, the Hon. Kinga Surma, Minister of Infrastructure, the Hon. Rod Phillips, Minister of Long-Term Care and MPP for Ajax, all Durham Region MPPs, Chair John Henry, Region of Durham, all Durham Region municipalities, all Durham Region MPs, and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau for circulation.

If you require further information please contact me at 905-619-2529 ext. 3342 or alexander.harras@ajax.ca.

Sincerely,



Alexander Harras
Manager of Legislative Services/Deputy Clerk

Copy: Councillor A. Khan
Regional Councillor J. Dies
Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy, Minister of Finance
Hon. Merrilee Fullerton, Minister of Children, Community and Social Services
Hon. Kinga Surma, Minister of Infrastructure
Hon. Rod Phillips, Minister of Long-Term Care and MPP for Ajax
All Durham Region MPPs
Durham Regional Chair John Henry
All Durham Region municipalities
All Durham Region MPs
Rt Hon. Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada

Enclosures: Delegate Speech
Presentation: Not your TV Friendly Autism

I have been wondering this whole time how I can fit this story into 5 minutes for it has been 10 years of struggles. My name is Vanessa Shelley and like so many of you I am a parent.

From the moment I mention to anyone I have an autistic son they usually say “oh like on tv”. I am here to today to tell you that my sons type of Autism isn't the TV friendly kind portrayed on shows like The Good Doctor, Atypical or even Sheldon Cooper from the Big Bang Theory. For his type of autism is the most severe type, the level III.

Diagnosed at age 2 his cognitive function remains at that level even today. He is considered nonverbal though he does say some words and phrases with much intense therapy. At only 3 years of age, his extreme violence began which resulted in a broken nose, endless scratches, bites and bruises to not only myself but any of his caregivers. This violence continued on until he was 6. He stayed in diapers until the age of nearly 8. (though sadly many will never potty train and will continue diapers into adulthood.)

At the age of 9 the self injuring began. Watching your child repeatedly and obsessively bash his head against walls, counters and furniture to the point of bruising and being bloody, tearing flesh from his body or hair from his own head is a gut-wrenching experience is an understatement

In April I frantically had to call 911 as he tried to smash his head through a plate glass window and would beat me when I would try to stop him. He ended up at Sick Kids Hospital in the Psych ward for 5 days heavily sedated and even was strapped down to the bed. He was considered a violent patient, so I had to have a support worker in the room 24/7 with me for safety and there was a guard posted outside his door.

As a parent our mandate is to keep our children safe. This has nearly impossible as he reaches my size because his obsessions, violence and self injuring compulsions become increasingly worse. In fact 2 weeks after being released from hospital he attempted to hit his head off my steering wheel while driving on the 401 nearly killing us. This has happened multiple times since. He has no sense of danger and like so many children at the level 3 will escape from the home and wander without the verbal reasoning skills if he were to get lost to be able to tell anyone where he lives. Special locks are required on all our doors.

He also requires constant supervision for even taking a minute to use the washroom or have a shower means he will tear lights from the ceiling, pull outlets from the walls, break glass and head bang.. Many are shocked that I still must baby proof my house so that he can dump chemicals on himself or break dishes. To say it is exhausting is an understatement. This is the reason more parents in this situation have little if any energy to fight for the awareness we need. Most of our marriages (including my own)will fail because of the stress and constant turmoil leaving single parents even more exhausted, beaten and alone.

I have spent countless hours dealing with doctors, behavioural therapists and crisis centres trying to regulate the behaviours. Programs like ABA and IBI have asked him to leave as his needs and behaviours were more than they could handle, leaving myself to look after him. So many of programs designed to provide respite to parents he does not qualify as his level of needs is too high.

I began to realize that The option to keep him fulltime in my care was becoming more and more dangerous. As I began to inquire for long term solutions, I was hit with the hard reality that there are 15 year waitlists for public care homes or private homes that could take him sooner but at a cost of \$530/day

I tell my story because so many parents on these long waitlist end up trying to keep their children in their care and suffer serious injuries or even get killed.

I want to commend the government for the steps they have taken to provide support for autism in general. I especially want to thank Councillors Khan and Dies for truly hearing what residents of not only Ajax and Durham Region are facing but truly Ontarian's and Canadians alike. Their commitment to letting our voices be heard is commendable and more appreciated than we can ever express in words.

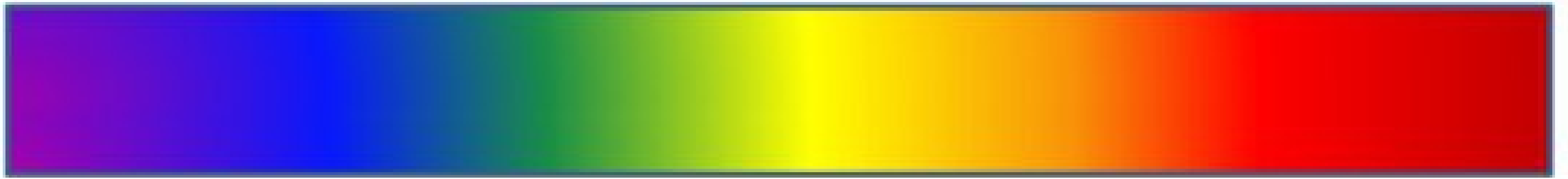
If I can do anything here today it is to bring awareness to a situation that many are unaware exists but is all too real for so many of us parents.



Level 3 Autism

NOT AS SEEN ON TV





LEVEL 1

High Functioning Autism

Requiring support; Difficulty initiating social interactions; Inflexibility of behavior; Difficulty switching activities; Problems with organization.

LEVEL 2

Autism

Requiring substantial support; Marked deficits with social interactions; Inflexibility of behavior; Difficulty or distress coping with change; Repetitive behaviors.

LEVEL 3

Severe Autism

Requiring very substantial support; Severe deficits with social interactions & communication; Inflexibility of behavior; Extreme difficulty or distress coping with change; Repetitive behaviors interfere

Headbanging

SELF INJURING



911 Call Day







I fear my 14-year-old son will kill me one day

When Sarah's son Robbie was diagnosed with autism, aged four, she swore she would always protect and care for him. But 10 years on, she is in need of protection herself



▲ 'The tension in our house now is constant. If Robbie does hit me when I'm alone I curl up in a ball on the floor and try to protect my face.' Photograph: Posed by model/Alamy

Admitting that I'm scared of my son is almost impossible and no one knows all the details of our life behind closed doors. I'm small and very slight and Robbie is now nearly 6 feet tall and quite solid so he can inflict a lot of damage on me if my husband David isn't there to stop it. The first time Robbie hurt me he was 11 and I'm still not convinced it was deliberate. We'd had a week of terrible weather and

'I'm scared of my own autistic child'

By Noel Phillips and Tanya Hines
BBC Victoria Derbyshire programme

© 30 October 2017



Ian Goldworthy says bars across the windows have made his son's bedroom "look like a cell"

Parents struggling to cope with their violent autistic children are not being properly supported by local authorities, the National Autistic Society says.

For some, a violent outburst can be a daily occurrence.

"I'm scared of him. You live on a knife edge. You don't know what's coming next," Lucy Goldworthy told the BBC's Victoria Derbyshire programme.

She has previously been left with a split lip and bruising following her son Elliot's violent outbursts, while her husband Ian has been left with a scratched cornea.

Twelve-year-old Elliot has autism and learning difficulties which, in his case, means he is unable to speak.

His condition requires round-the-clock care and he does not understand the effects of his actions.

Ian and Lucy say their son became violent and aggressive from the age of five.

At his current age, he is becoming increasingly difficult to control.

"If it was a toddler, having a huge tantrum, scratching and kicking you, you can manage it better," Lucy says.