TORONTO Member Motion

City Council

Notice of Motion

MM6.3	ACTION			Ward: All

Strengthening Ontario's Autism Program - by Councillor Paula Fletcher, seconded by Councillor Shelley Carroll

**** Notice of this Motion has been given.***
**** This Motion is subject to referral to the Executive Committee. A two-thirds vote is required to waive referral.***

Recommendations

Councillor Paula Fletcher, seconded by Councillor Shelley Carroll, recommends that:

1. City Council request the City Manager to formally request the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services to suspend implementation of its planned changes to the Ontario Autism Program pending meaningful consultation with a broad range of relevant stakeholders and inclusion of any necessary revisions to the Program to ensure that autistic children receive the support they need to thrive within their communities, and City Council direct that a copy of this Item be forwarded to Premier Ford, Minister Mulroney and the Association of Municipalities Ontario.

Summary

The Public Health Agency of Canada and the Canadian Medical Association Journal, Autism Spectrum Disorder, is one of the most common developmental disabilities in Canada with 1 in 66 children diagnosed and approximately 1 percent of the Canadian population affected by Autism Spectrum Disorder, which means there are approximately 100,000 Ontarians on the autism spectrum. Autism Spectrum Disorder is a life-long neurological disorder that affects the way a person communicates and relates to the people and world around them.

While Autism Spectrum Disorder affects every child differently, their symptoms, abilities and experiences can improve over time with the help of therapies and supportive practices; with evidence demonstrating that when children start behavioural intervention between ages 2 and 5, they gain improvements in cognitive and language development, are better prepared for school and have better long-term outcomes in adulthood.

The Provincial Government has recently introduced new funding programs and service delivery approaches intended to address waitlists for treatment and other challenges within the existing Autism Spectrum Disorder support system. Considerable concerns have been expressed about these funding and program changes by a broad variety of stakeholders including Autism Ontario, physicians, educators, therapists, clinicians and parents.

These concerns speak to such matters as the inadequacy of funding, inflexibility of treatment programs and lack of appropriate training and resources within classrooms that will be expected to support Autism Spectrum Disorder students – any of which can detrimentally affect families across Ontario including those in Toronto.

Background Information (City Council)

Member Motion MM6.3