



## Helping autistic children and their families

Dear Member of Parliament,

I am writing to you as a concerned Parent/Citizen with regards to the impact the proposed Bill 148 will have – specifically the raise in the minimum wage – will have on my Family and my child who is diagnosed with Autism.

**Autism** is a neurodevelopmental disorder that impairs social, behavioural and communication abilities. Autism is the fastest growing developmental disability in the world, and today affects about 67 million people worldwide. Fewer than 30 years ago, 1 in 10,000 children were diagnosed with autism; today, 1 in 68 is being diagnosed with Autism, and some recent estimates are higher. Boys are four times more likely than girls to have Autism: 54% of boys have some form of Autism.

Currently **Children at Risk, Ottawa** is a charity that supports Autistic children and their families. This charity extends services and programs to assist individuals diagnosed within the Autism Spectrum Disorders. For example, this year, Children at Risk held a 7<sup>th</sup> Year of summer day camp, **Camp Kaleidoscope** – with 334 weekly camp spots for children with Autism! This represents a **375% increase in service** since their 1<sup>st</sup> Camp in 2011 – indicative of the critical need of Supports for Autism!

With the necessary staffing of 1:1 for Camper to Counsellor, wage costs will increase exorbitantly - with unavoidable increases in probably both Camp Fees for the Families and Staffing Costs for the Charity. These increases will reduce access to the Camp for many children – as Families will be unable to afford the Fees. It may even affect the future of this Service – as the Charity may be unable to raise additional funds to keep fees low. At the least – it will **discriminate** against lower income Families with those who HAVE being able to send their child to this critically-important respite service – and those who HAVE NOT will see their child and family penalized by having their access reduced or eliminated due to lack of funds.

Community supports for an Autistic child or adult are of utmost importance! With the incidence of diagnosis of Autism now so alarmingly high, supports offered by Children at Risk are needed more than ever. I implore you to consider the devastation that will occur with the passing of this Bill and hope, at the very least, consideration for a longer phasing-in period as suggested by the Canadian Centre for Economic Analysis' (CANCEA). I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience – your decision can help make a difference in the quality of life for my special needs child and family!

Yours truly,

Parent/Supporter



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