

## More autistic children to receive access to services

### EDITORIAL

A tumultuous issue that infuriated many at the legislature was the controversial change for financial supports to families with autistic children.

As of April 1, Families will be eligible to receive \$20,000 a year for each child under 6 ? up to a lifetime maximum of \$140,000 to be used on the services of their choice such as assessments and consultations, family and caregiver capacity building and training, respite services, technology aids and travel.

This follows pledge for more funding as the progressive conservative government has increased spending from the Liberal's \$256 million to \$321 million.

Children older than that can access up to \$5,000 a year up to the age of 18, to a lifetime maximum of \$55,000, according to the Toronto Star.

However, the amounts are based on a sliding scale depending on family income, and only those earning less than \$55,000 in net income will qualify for the amount.

Families, however, state the money will fall short, given intensive therapy for children with severe needs can cost up to \$80,000 a year.

This come as the Progressive Conservatives plan to clear a 23,000 child wait list and ensure more children receive supports. Currently, 8,400 receive funding from the province.

It's interesting to note what the Progressive Conservatives are trying to accomplish by putting a cap on spending. Many children need access to supports. It shouldn't matter what side they fall on the spectrum, whether they have a minor hinderance or a severe problem. Whether they have many struggles or much success.

Can't it then be argued that all children with the neurological disorder should have the chance to receive treatment? In that sense, why should one child receive much more treatment and have a better life than those who are still waiting for their number to be called?

Autism is an extremely sensitive issue. It's one that many people do not want to talk about as it can be near and dear to their hearts and as such parents know the risks involve in having a child.

Parents who have autistic children tend to want compassion, acceptance and understanding of the situation rather than pity, according to numerous testimonials.

That said, shouldn't the program benefit all families instead of a select few? Shouldn't every child should have some chance of a better life, rather than a small margin? Why should 8,400 children receive special help when there's 23,000 who also need assistance? With 8,400 in and 23,000, essentially 31,000 children will receive assistance rather than a small portion.

Yes, there's no one size fits all solution for autism supports. And there may not be enough therapists out there to support all these children. However, all families should deserve a chance to receive some assistance.

On the same token, all families want accessibility to services and funding. Would families want to wait for a long period of time, for who knows how long, to receive full intensive services instead of having help now?

There however needs be a definitive line drawn where everyone has equal access to treatment rather than only a select few. We can't all be selfish. Perhaps it's best to hold back a little so a lot more children can have a better life.