

Kerry's Place grant will help amplify voices and impact in autism community

A new program spearheaded by Kerry's Place Autism Services will help create a more inclusive and accessible environment for those living on the spectrum.

On Friday, Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy and Ontario Minister for Seniors and Accessibility Raymond Cho presented Kerry's Place, which was formerly based on Berczy Street, with a grant of \$30,000 to advance their EnAbling Inclusive Futures Project.

This initiative is designed to bolster the inclusivity and accessibility of autism services across any public, private, or community-based setting and will be delivered in partnership with Autism Advocates.

It includes forwarding new inclusive practices by offering an innovative professional training workshop, resource guide and consultation service to increase awareness of autism and give service providers the knowledge, tools and strategies necessary to create more inclusive and accessible environments for autistic individuals.

"We are very pleased to receive this grant from the Ministry of Seniors and Accessibility for our EnAbling Inclusive Futures Project," said Susan VanDeVelde-Coke, CEO and President of Kerry's Place. "This funding will help us launch important training co-developed and delivered by Autism Advocates to a wide range of organizations across Ontario."

Added Niko Pupella, a member of Kerry's Place's Autism Advisory Committee: "The EnAbling Change Grant offers Autistic Advocates a platform to amplify their voices and make a meaningful impact on the community. This initiative provides a chance for Kerry's Place and advocates to collaborate in developing and delivering training content that enhances a greater understanding and acceptance of autism."

The services Kerry's Place provides to the community were lauded ahead of Friday's presentation.

"We know that inclusivity is not just about opening doors; it's about creating spaces where every individual feels valued, heard and empowered," said Minister Cho in a statement. "This ground-breaking initiative from Kerry's Place will help to foster understanding and equity so that autistic individuals can thrive."

Added MPP Gallagher Murphy: "Organisations like Kerry's Place Autism Services are making a real difference in the lives of individuals with autism and their families. With this investment of over \$30,000, I'm confident that Kerry's Place will continue to create more inclusive environments here in our community, ensuring that autistic individuals have an equal opportunity to thrive and succeed."

WOMEN'S CENTRE RECEIVES FUNDING

The Women's Centre of York Region was also a recipient of Provincial dollars last week, with \$77,800 in seed money presented by MPP Gallagher Murphy to help in the creation of a new program that will help youth respond to gender-based violence in young women and build skills to prevent such violence.

It will help young women aged 16 to 24 build strong peer networks, confidence, and be able to draw upon said skills to recognize and respond to examples of gender-based violence and intimate partner violence.

The goals will be achieved through social activities, vision boards, and games.

"Women's Centre of York Region has supported women in their greatest time of need, since 1977," said Nivedita Balachandran, Executive Director, of Women's Centre of York Region, in a statement. "For decades, we have heard women experiencing abuse and

violence say that our programs and services would have helped them avoid abuse if they had known about them at a younger age. This program is pivotal in supporting young women to build the skills and resources to help break the cycle of violence and exploitation among young women.?

By Brock Weir