



For Immediate Release
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Province Taking Action on Recommendations from Autism Report

CHARLOTTETOWN, PEI -- Recommendations outlined in the new Autism Action Plan will guide the direction for the provincial Autism Strategy, says Education and Early Childhood Development Minister Doug Currie.

“Continuing to improve services to families and individuals living with an Autism Spectrum Disorder is a priority,” said Mr. Currie. “Prince Edward Island already has one of the best ratios in Canada of highly trained, certified professionals working with autistic children and their families. We know that services have come a long way, but there is still more to do.”

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development partnered with the Autism Society of PEI and other provincial government departments to develop recommendations aimed at strengthening services for children and families coping with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

The Autism Action Plan includes 37 recommendations. The department has already made significant progress by implementing new initiatives, including:

- Development of a new Intensive Kindergarten Support model to ensure children can continue to receive intensive support in their first school year.
- Increasing service capacity by hiring the Preschool Autism Co-ordinator and three full-time Preschool Autism Specialists, which is helping to decrease wait times.
- Hiring two new Autism Consultants, who will begin training this fall, to build capacity for supporting students at the Eastern and

Western School Boards.

- Ensuring that children receiving Intensive Behavioural Intervention (IBI) services are now assessed at entry and exit from the program to help evaluate the effectiveness of the service.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is taking immediate action on a number of additional recommendations outlined in the Autism Action Plan. Some of those actions include the creation of a part-time navigator position to help families understand the system and provide support, as well as enhancing the wage subsidy for home-based IBI tutors to help families subsidize wages while the department develops a new model for service delivery.

“A lot of time and effort went into the development of this report, which gives a roadmap to guide future service improvements. Today’s announced actions are an important first step. We're looking forward to working with government to develop the necessary further steps required to effectively support Islanders living with Autism,” said Jeff Himelman, President of the Autism Society of Prince Edward Island.

“I am committed to developing an integrated, streamlined approach to the way we deliver autism services and programs in this province,” said Mr. Currie. “I would like to thank the members of the Autism Action Group for the work that went into this report. Your dedication to helping children with ASD is admirable and appreciated.”

Over the last year, the department has significantly increased its capacity to serve young children with autism in an IBI model, said the minister. To accommodate this growth and ensure quality and consistency of services going forward, a Preschool Autism Services handbook has been developed and will be available to the public in the coming weeks.

The Prince Edward Island Autism Action Plan: Another Piece of the Puzzle is available at Island Information Service or online at www.gov.pe.ca/eecd.