



AUTISM CANADA WELCOMES CHANGES TO ONTARIO'S LOCKDOWN RULES ALLOWING GYMS CATERING TO THE DISABILITIES COMMUNITY TO REOPEN

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TORONTO, ON | March 19, 2021 —

Everyone has felt the impact of COVID-19 differently. Many have been without access to their local gym or exercise facility. For those on the Autism Spectrum, physical activity is not only a positive outlet it is in our view an essential service. Unfortunately, for many Ontarians, including those on the Autism Spectrum, they have been unable to go to the gym or get exercise because indoor fitness facilities were closed province-wide from late December to mid-February, and during the first four months of the pandemic last year. For those living in regions currently under lockdown, these facilities are mostly still closed.

“These closures have impacted the health and well-being of all Ontarians but have disproportionately impacted the disabilities community and those on the Autism Spectrum, who often require the support, equipment, classes and structure which gyms, indoor fitness facilities, trainers, and coaches provide in order to optimize their mental and physical health.” stated Dermot Cleary, Autism Canada Chair.

However, effective February 5, 2021, the Ontario government amended its rules in lockdown areas, allowing certain gyms and indoor fitness facilities to reopen. These facilities can open to serve those in the disabilities community, including those on the Autism Spectrum, who require physical therapy in order to maintain their health and cannot get this elsewhere.

Autism Canada, the national advocacy group serving the autism community, welcomes this modification to the legislation and wants to raise awareness so that those who require exercise and fitness know that there are gyms and facilities that are open to assist them, even in areas which are currently locked down.

“Autism Canada is hopeful that this decision will help restore some sense of normalcy and reestablish opportunities for health and wellness for those on the Autism Spectrum”, noted Barbara Patten, Executive Director of Autism Canada.

Sascha King, the founder of NorthX Fitness in Kitchener – a gym catering to the disabilities community which reopened under the new rules – also welcomed the decision to allow her clients to return to the gym.



“Exercise needs to be accessible by all regardless of ability to attain essential health services. Allowing gyms and studios to continue serving the vulnerable, disabled, and mental health populations is essential for their health and overall well-being”, King stated.

King also notes that “many may not understand the importance of a gym or fitness studio, but for those who are unable to accomplish movement and exercise independently and safely, a gym or studio with knowledgeable and supportive coaches and trainers will do just that, in a safe and supportive environment.”

The regulation permitting these facilities to open is O. Reg. 82/20, found at: <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/200082>.

About Autism Canada

2021 marks our 45th Anniversary and we are proud to have served the autism community in Canada since 1976. Autism Canada is the only Canadian organization with a national perspective on the issues currently facing those with Autism Spectrum Disorder, their families and other stakeholders. The staff, Board of Directors, and Autism Ambassadors have a deep and very personal connection to the Autism Spectrum. We live it in both our personal and professional lives which is what gives us the passion and expertise to proudly continue our work. Autism Canada stands for inclusivity, knowledge, and acceptance and encourages everyone to See The Spectrum Differently.

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For media inquiries, please contact:

Autism Canada

info@autismcanada.org

647-362-5610