



Autism Nova Scotia Unveils Bright New Smilezone Spaces with Support from Tim Hortons Smile Cookie Campaign

Transformative upgrades create fun, calming environments for children and families receiving support at Autism Nova Scotia and YWCA Halifax Supportive Housing

HALIFAX, NS – April 24, 2025 – Autism Nova Scotia is proud to celebrate the grand opening of five newly transformed Smilezone spaces, designed to create inclusive, welcoming, and accepting environments for children and families receiving support in the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM).

Located in the QuickStart Nova Scotia family rooms and waiting area at Autism Nova Scotia's new office on Joseph Howe Drive, these spaces were made possible through the incredible generosity of local Tim Hortons HRM Owners and the \$168,000 raised by the Tim Hortons Smile Cookie Campaign. The Smilezones feature vibrant murals, sensory-friendly equipment, and interactive technology to help children feel more at ease while receiving support.

"Smilezone Foundation believes every child deserves to feel safe, valued, and uplifted—especially during life's most challenging moments," said Scott Bachly, Co-Founder of Smilezone Foundation. "The newly transformed spaces at Autism Nova Scotia and YWCA Halifax are a testament to the power of community. Thanks to the incredible generosity of the Tim Hortons Smile Cookie Campaign and local HRM owners, we're able to create environments that bring joy and comfort to children and families who need it most. None of this would be possible without the continued support of Halifax residents who show up year after year with a smile—and a cookie—in hand."

"We're incredibly grateful to local HRM Tim Hortons owners, the Smilezone Foundation, and everyone who supported the Tim Hortons Smile Cookie Campaign," said Amanda Alexander, Executive Director of Autism Nova Scotia. "These new Smilezone spaces offer a warm, inclusive environment for families in our QuickStart Nova Scotia program—many of whom are just beginning their autism journey. They will also serve as unique, sensory-friendly spaces for Autistic teens and young adults to connect through social and recreational programming. This transformation is a powerful reminder of what's possible when community comes together to create spaces where people of all ages feel safe, supported, and valued."

Smilezone spaces are designed to transform plain, clinical, and often overlooked areas into bright, engaging environments that reduce stress and anxiety for children and families during challenging times. By creating uplifting spaces filled with colour, comfort, and interactive features, Smilezones help make the healing process more positive. With over 450 Smilezones across 96 communities in Canada, Smilezone Foundation is reaching and supporting hundreds of thousands of children and caregivers with environments that inspire calm, joy, and connection when it's needed most.

"We're incredibly thankful to our loyal Tim Hortons guests whose support during the Smile Cookie Campaign made this incredible project possible," said Nancy Cahill, Tim Hortons HRM Owner. "It's truly inspiring to see how something

as simple as a cookie can lead to such meaningful change. Supporting local programs that directly impact children and families in our community is something we're deeply proud to be part of—it's about giving back to the place we call home."

In addition to the five new Smilezones at Autism Nova Scotia, the Smile Cookie donation also funded four refurbished spaces at the YWCA Halifax's Supportive Housing for Young Mothers (SHYM) Program, including a kitchen, programming room, child-minding area, and main entrance—each transformed to uplift the spirits of young mothers and their children.

"An uplifting environment can truly transform lives, inspiring the incredible women and children at Supportive Housing For Young Mothers (SHYM)," said Miia Suokonautio, Executive Director of YWCA Halifax. "We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Smilezone Foundation for their dedicated efforts in enhancing our common spaces. We are also deeply thankful to Tim Hortons HRM for their generous funding of Smilezone projects at Autism Nova Scotia and YWCA Halifax. Together, we are creating brighter futures for young mothers and their children."

ABOUT SMILEZONE FOUNDATION:

Smilezone Foundation is a registered charity in Oakville, Ontario committed to improving the lives of children receiving medical treatment at health facilities across Canada. In 2012 founders Adam Graves and Scott Bachly were approached to make a financial contribution to the construction of a local hospital. Through partnerships with hospitals, community centers, and other organizations, Smilezone creates accessible, fun, and therapeutic environments where children can heal and thrive. Smilezone has transformed 450 spaces into Smilezones across Canada, benefiting over 96 communities and reaching hundreds of thousands of children, parents, health care workers and families. For more information, visit www.smilezone.com.

ABOUT AUTISM NOVA SCOTIA:

Autism Nova Scotia is a non-profit community-based organization that builds understanding, acceptance, and inclusion for Autistics/individuals on the autism spectrum and their families through leadership, advocacy, education, training, and programming across the lifespan. Autism Nova Scotia was founded in 2002 by Joan and Jack Craig, parents of an Autistic adult son. Autism Nova Scotia delivers programming in Halifax and across Nova Scotia through our eight Regional Autism Centres. Our programs and services include Social & Community Inclusion; Mental Health & Wellness; Post Secondary & Employment Support; Strategic Engagement; and Family & Caregiver Support. For more information, visit www.autismnovascotia.ca.

ABOUT YWCA HALIFAX:

YWCA Halifax is for, and by, women, girls, Two Spirit, and gender diverse people. Together we're building a future of gender equality by creating opportunities and supports for childcare, education, employment, housing, financial security, and more. We transform lives by providing a continuum of supports that build on people's strengths to create lasting, positive change for women and gender diverse people in the Halifax Regional Municipality. We strive to change the root causes of inequality, violence, poverty, and homelessness.

ABOUT SHYM:

Supportive Housing for Young Mothers offers long-term housing, parenting support, and life skills development for young single mothers ages 16 to 24. Through guided goal planning and wraparound supports, participants can begin to dream and work towards the future they want for themselves and their family.

For more information:

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