



**Media Release**  
For Immediate Release  
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## **Ontario Autism Coalition demands that the Ford Government end the conflict of interest with the Regional Autism Programs**

The Ontario Autism Coalition (OAC) is demanding the Ontario Government end the conflict of interest with the province's nine Regional Autism Service Providers. The president of the OAC will address the issue today at a press conference in the Queen's Park media studio at 1:00 p.m. Parents will also share their stories.

For too long, the Regional Providers have simultaneously acted as service providers as well as managing waitlists and funding for Ontario's autism services. We allege that this power has resulted in many cases of fiscal mismanagement and unethical behaviour:

1. In the new Ontario Autism Program (OAP), separate waitlists for Direct Service Option (DSO) and Direct Funding Option (DFO) were supposed to be merged into one waitlist per service area. Families are supposed to have the choice between DSO, offered by the Regional Providers, or DFO services offered by private-sector providers. **Despite these ministerial guidelines, the Regional Providers continue to use multiple waitlists.** They coerce parents into choosing DSO over DFO, by using misleading tactics which include telling them that their child would access DSO faster than DFO, that the quality of service is better through DSO and that parents will not have any out of pocket expenses if choosing DSO.
2. **Regional Providers function as both a transfer payment agency while at the same time providing DSO services. This is a huge conflict of interest.** Regional Providers cannot provide both clinical DSO services, and administrative oversight of the funding of DFO providers without being in an obvious state of conflict. The entities responsible for clinical and financial decision making must be separate and free of any possible conflict.
3. **There continue to be inequities for families who choose DFO over DSO** which the Regional Providers are keen to point out to vulnerable parents desperately waiting for services for their child:
  - Parents are required to manage funding when choosing DFO, having to set up a separate bank account, pay the private provider and reconcile every three months in order to have the next block of funding released. DSO parents do not have these responsibilities.
  - When a child is sick, DFO funding does not pay for a missed session whereas DSO funding does not ask parents to pay for a missed day.

The OAC demands that the Ontario Government end this conflict of interest with the Regional Providers and address this long overdue issue of power of the Regional Providers over vulnerable Ontario families.

**For more information:**

Laura Kirby McIntosh,  
President, Ontario Autism Coalition,  
(416) 315-7939

**En Français:**

Marguerite Schabas  
Secrétaire-Trésorier, La Coalition Ontarienne de l'Autisme  
(416) 545-9160