



Media Release
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Ford Government's Ontario Autism Program Enhancement Doesn't Address the Big Issues

The Hon. Lisa MacLeod announced “enhancements” to the Ontario Autism Program (OAP) today in response to widespread criticism from families and other stakeholders for the drastic changes they announced in February. While the [Ontario Autism Coalition](#) (OAC) is pleased that the government has eliminated the income testing as a criteria for service, has added a broader range of eligible services such as speech language pathology and occupational therapy, and will extend contracts for families already receiving service under the previous program to ameliorate the transition for children into schools, the government is proceeding with flat-rate funding for children based on age and not individual needs. The OAC will continue to advocate for a program that is needs based and does not discriminate based on a child’s age.

This “one size fits all approach” with age cut-offs for funding levels remains a serious concern for families as children with higher needs will not receive adequate funding for Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) therapy at the high intensity level that they require. Says Marguerite Schabas, Secretary-Treasurer of the OAC, *“The government should be completely ashamed of itself for putting families through this for the past six weeks. It needs to come up with a much better plan that meets the needs of all children regardless of their age”*.

The OAC is again requesting that the government reconsider the reforms and consult with experts, advocates and families at all stages of service to come up with a program that meets the individual needs of children and youth.

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The OAC is a province-wide organization that advocates for Ontario’s autism community.