



**ONTARIO
AUTISM
COALITION**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Failure to deliver needs-based autism funding calls government competence into question

The Hon. Todd Smith has broken his promise to create a needs-based autism program by April 2020 that would implement all of the recommendations of the Autism Advisory Panel. In his press conference today, he stated families may have to wait until 2021 to access core therapies that are needs-based. Families are devastated.

Today's announcement that the Ford government will continue issuing one-size-fits-all childhood budget cheques as part of an "interim plan" is a colossal mistake for several reasons:

1. It ignores a key recommendation of the Minister's own advisory panel. The panel stated that there must be continuity of service. Many childhood budgets that have been issued have already been spent, and these families are now left with no way to continue therapy. For those receiving extensions on previous behavior plans that may expire before the new program is ready, this plan offers no assurances that there will be no interruptions.
2. It will not deliver desperately needed behavioural therapy. It is unethical for service providers to begin an ABA service that cannot be funded to completion. Most children and youth will not have adequate funding due to the one-size-fits-all approach. This means that some of those Childhood Budget cheques will go unspent.
3. It will cause further job losses. Unpredictable funding over the last ten months has led to hundreds of job losses. Many of these were in areas that were already underserved, such as northern Ontario. Because families will be unable to afford adequate ABA programs, job losses will inevitably continue.
4. It is highly unlikely that 23,000 cheques can be issued in the next three months, based on past performance. Only 3,290 childhood budgets have been issued over the last ten months. Nothing about the MacLeod/Smith plan has happened when promised.
5. It is a waste of taxpayer dollars. The economist Mike Moffatt set out the irredeemable flaws in the MacLeod plan (<https://link.medium.com/QvOewqFzu2>) which have now been perpetuated.

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The Ontario Autism Coalition is a non-profit Ontario corporation dedicated to advocacy and political action on behalf of people with autism.
www.ontarioautismcoalition.com