



**ONTARIO
AUTISM
COALITION**

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**Media Advisory
February 12, 2020**

Families to Protest Delays to Autism Program

At 11:30 a.m. on Tuesday, February 18, 2020, autism families from across the province will once again gather at Queen's Park to demand that the Ford government provide needs-based funding to children and youth with autism without delay.

The protest will be preceded by a 10:00 a.m. news conference in the Queen's Park media studio.

Background

Doug Ford has broken the promise he made during the last election, which was to support families with autism "1,000%." Instead, his government made massive cuts to individual funding under the Ontario Autism Program (OAP) in a disastrous one-size-fits-all plan introduced in February, 2019. This sparked massive protests across the province. Minister Todd Smith, who was appointed in June when the previous minister was demoted, has backtracked on his promise to have a new needs-based program up and running by April of 2020. Families will now be waiting an additional year for core services in the OAP.

Despite widespread public opposition, the Ford government is continuing its roll out of Childhood Budgets. While Minister Smith has offered access to one-time funding to those on the wait-list, these interim payments are the same as Childhood Budgets—just under a different name. The one-time funding provides the same fixed amount of money based on their child's age (\$20,000 for children under six, and \$5,000 for children six and over), which completely ignores a child's individual level of need. While Doug Ford forces children to wait, these amounts will not sustain services, and they come nowhere close to covering the real costs of intensive therapy for those with high needs. And as a result, potentially disastrous interruptions in therapy programs will occur during the next year.

Our community has continued to receive unwavering support from the general public. A solidarity rally hosted by Northern Autism Families will be held in Thunder Bay at the same time as the Queen's Park rally. We are grateful that MPPs from the NDP, Liberal, and Green parties will be speaking in support of children with autism at the rally. Government MPPs declined the invitation. Other speakers will include autistic self-advocates, representatives from organized labour, parents of children with autism, and professionals in the field. We are also happy to welcome Ed the Sock, as well as musical entertainers Splash'N Boots.

The Ontario Autism Coalition will continue to be relentless in its pursuit of better supports for autistic people and their families.

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For more information please contact:

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#AutismDoesntEndAtFord

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