



**ONTARIO
AUTISM
COALITION**

876 Atwater Avenue, Mississauga, Ontario, L5E 1M1 (416) 451-8315

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 5, 2020

The Ford Government Short Changes Autism Families...Again

Doug Ford is quite literally saving money on the backs of autistic children. Wednesday's announcement from the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario confirms the worst fears of the autism community. Despite promising to double the funding for autism therapy in this province, we now know that the government chose to purposely underspend its budget on the Ontario Autism Program (OAP). The government has spent less than half of the \$610 million dollars allocated to the autism file in the first ¾ of this budget year.

As a result, more and more families have gone into crisis while their children have been forced to wait for the needs-based therapy promised, (but far from delivered,) by Minister Todd Smith. The waitlist sits virtually unchanged at over 22,000 children according to the Ministry since the program was decimated in February, 2019. When a government maliciously underspends its budget while families and children in this province are in a state of crisis, it is not merely a failure of fiscal responsibility, but a failure of conscience as well.

When Hon. Todd Smith [announced](#) on December 17, 2019, that full implementation of the needs-based program would be delayed by another year, parents felt betrayed. Yesterday's announcement only compounds that feeling.

The government has had the funds to repair the damage it has done to this program all along. We now know for certain that if they *wanted* to, they could have kept their promise of providing core services—ABA, speech, and occupational therapy—by April of 2020. Instead, the government has chosen to extend Lisa MacLeod's disastrous Childhood Budget program for another year. As a result, funding is being sent out in amounts that do not provide families with meaningful support.

Families that receive more money than they need must return unspent funds at the end of their Childhood Budget period, now cynically renamed as "one-time funding," rather than seeing the funds re-allocated to another child that may desperately need it. The interim plan as it stands is reckless and continues to leave families scrambling to find help for their children.

Worst of all, the Ministry is spending unknown amounts of money on sole-sourced contracts for things like on-line parent training and early intervention programs instead of providing intensive therapy to autistic children who desperately need it. Tax payers should be horrified that the government is willing to throw away the futures of children with autism in all in the name of budgetary restraint. It is time for this government to step up and do right by this community. We're tired of broken promises and we're tired of lies. It's time for action.

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For more information please contact:

Laura Kirby-McIntosh, President, 416-315-7939

Alina Cameron (Slate River), OAC Director, 807-632-2287

Kerry Monaghan (Ottawa), OAC Director, 613-262-7390

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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.

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