

ONTABA MEDIA STATEMENT ON CHANGES TO THE ONTARIO AUTISM PROGRAM

Minister Lisa MacLeod announced enhancements to planned government changes to the Ontario Autism Program, scheduled to take effect April 1. ONTABA, like many in the community, had requested that the Ministry pause the imminent changes, which were considered detrimental to children with autism. We thank Minister MacLeod for listening to the community's call for a pause, and hope this signals a new openness to engage in meaningful consultation with parents and professionals about evidence-based services for children and youth with autism.

Positive news:

- Recognition that autism is a spectrum with a diversity of needs to address
- Six-month contract renewal options for children currently in service, providing some transition planning time for school entry
- Removed income testing
- Government commitment to consultation over the next few months, providing the opportunity to improve the plan to better meet the needs of children, particularly those with complex needs
- Government confirmed the commitment of \$321 Million, and is prepared to go further to support those enhancements following consultation
- Opening funding to allied disciplines including SLP & OT that are frequently multidisciplinary partners in ABA interventions

Concerning news:

- Funding should be based on needs, not arbitrary age or yearly caps; needs-based funding mitigates risk of overspending beyond need, and underspending below need
- Annual funding limits of \$5,000 & \$20,000, with the expectation that ALL services (e.g., ABA, SLP, OT, respite, etc.) will be covered within this amount, is very likely to reduce the intensity of evidence-based ABA to subclinical levels
- Does NOT ensure the long-term availability of ABA for families with autistic children

- Does NOT fundamentally address three major issues that contributed to the waitlist: lack of professional capacity, lack of professional oversight (professional regulation), lack of ABA support at school
- Does NOT address the unique needs of rural/remote/Francophone/Indigenous communities
- Does NOT address the pressing needs of children on the waitlist
- Detail is needed about who will be consulted, and the intended outcomes of the consultations
- April 1 is days away, and to begin successfully, more information is required

ONTABA has consistently offered our professional expertise throughout this process, and remains fully committed to meaningful consultation and collaboration with all government to help address the needs of people with autism and their families, many of whom benefit from ABA services. We respectfully request that ONTABA be viewed as one of the integral groups that is called to the table to contribute our expertise, experience, and passion.

ONTABA

The Ontario Association for Behaviour Analysis (ONTABA) is the largest not-for-profit professional organization representing behaviour analysts in Canada. Our mission is to demonstrate leadership, knowledge, and innovation in education, training, and research for the ethical and effective application of behaviour analysis. ONTABA has been working for many years towards autonomous regulation of behaviour analysts to ensure public protection for recipients of behaviour analytic services. ONTABA is not a lobby group.

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