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May 3, 2016

The Honourable Kathleen Wynne
Premier
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The Honourable Tracy MacCharles
Minister of Children and Youth Services/Responsible for Women's Issues
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SUBJECT: RECONSIDER NEW ONTARIO AUTISM PLAN

Dear Premier Wynne and Minister MacCharles:

I am writing to you on behalf of the one million working people who are members of the Ontario Federation of Labour to call on your government to immediately reverse the changes to the Ontario Autism Program and redesign a plan to ensure that all children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), for whom Intensive Behavioural Intervention (IBI) has been prescribed by a qualified clinician, are able to obtain these services in a timely manner regardless of their age.

We add our voices to the chorus of concerned parents and professionals who are outraged by recent changes brought in by your government that would expel some 3,000 children with autism from the current IBI program based on age, including some 1,300 currently undergoing therapy, without reference to their clinical performance. This issue has been raised at the OFL by educator and educational worker unions across Ontario.

This decision will have a dramatic and negative impact on thousands of children who are in need of this valuable – and costly, intervention – and it will saddle the families of children with autism with incredible financial hardship at a time when their attention should be directed at providing the best support for their children.

The stories from affected families are gripping. They recount the struggles of children with autism who have spent years on waiting lists only to learn that they will now be deemed ineligible for the intervention that they desperately need to close the developmental gap. According to a recent National Post column by Tasha Kheiriddin,

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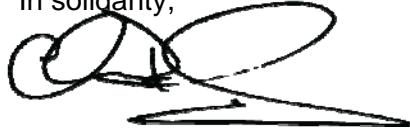
"IBI involves upwards of 20 hours a week of individualized therapy to reinforce positive behaviours and enable children, many of whom cannot speak, to perform the most basic of tasks — like responding to their name, or putting on a shirt. It can be the difference between a life of dependence and a chance at independence."

While the age two to four may in fact be the "optimum learning window" and the ideal time to receive IBI, it simply makes no sense for the government to make the unilateral decision to cancel this vital treatment for children who are five and older. For many of these children, IBI is still the best – and sometimes only – chance.

Autism does not end at five years old.

We are calling on the Ontario government to reconsider its new Ontario Autism Plan and instead propose a plan that leverages the lower cost, flexibility and transparency of a direct funding model so that all children with ASD, for whom Applied Behaviour Analysis and Intensive Behavioural Intervention has been prescribed by a qualified clinician, are able to get intervention in a timely manner regardless of their age.

In solidarity,



Chris Buckley
President
Ontario Federation of Labour

The Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) is Canada's largest provincial labour federation, representing 54 labour unions and over one million workers. For information, visit www.OFL.ca and follow @OFLabour on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

cc: Alliance Against the Ontario Autism Program
 All 54 Unions Affiliated to the OFL

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