



PO Box 1132 Station F
Toronto, ON M4Y 2T8

Premier Doug Ford
Legislative Building
Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A1

October 18, 2021

Dear Premier:

I'm writing today to ask you to fix the Ontario Autism Program and help 49,000 families who are on the waitlist for urgent care for their children.

More than two years ago you made a promise to Ontario families to reduce long wait times and give \$100 million in new funding to help pay for expensive and necessary early intervention services for children diagnosed with autism. Since then the wait list has more than doubled and your government has capped the amounts families can receive, limiting treatment for those without financial resources.

Studies show that Intensive Behavioral Intervention (IBI) treatment has positive long-term outcomes for children with moderate to severe Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), if they are treated before entering kindergarten. For every day one of these 49,000 families sits on the waitlist, they are one day closer to missing a crucial window in helping their child's development.

Intervention for ASD is expensive, often costing \$100 per hour or more and requiring up to 40 hours a week in treatment for the most severe cases. Under the government's cap of \$65,000 for the youngest age groups that could mean as little as 16 weeks of treatment. For teenagers with severe ASD it's just half that.

I'm requesting that you work with Minister Fullerton to:

- Follow the recommendations from the Ontario Autism Program Advisory Panel for a needs-based system and remove the age-based cap on funding.
- Do more to increase the availability of spots, including incentivizing current college and university students to become certified clinicians.
- Provide funding so groups such as KidsAbility and other nonprofit treatment providers can add and retain more clinicians and therapists, in order to maintain and increase current treatment levels and shorten waitlist times.

As a father of two wonderful girls I know what it's like to want the best for your children; the sleepless nights and stress when there is nothing you can do to help them. I'm concerned for families in my riding of Guelph

and across the province who don't have time to sit on a waitlist and don't have the financial resources to pay out-of-pocket.

Premier, families cannot wait. I'm asking you and Minister Fullerton to ease the minds of parents by investing in a better future for their children with ASD and make fixing the OAP a top priority for this session of the legislature.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mike Schreiner".

Mike Schreiner
Leader
Ontario Greens

Cc:

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton, Minister Children, Community and Social Services