

**Ministry of Children
and Youth Services**

Minister's Office

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**Ministère des Services
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June 30, 2016

Dear Parent:

It is an honour and a privilege to be writing to you as the newly appointed Minister of Children and Youth Services. I am excited to have been entrusted with the responsibility of serving the children, youth and families of Ontario.

As both the Minister and as a local MPP, I've been speaking with parents, advocates and experts, and what's clear is that families of children with autism face unique and often difficult challenges. That's why we are moving forward with the new Ontario Autism Program. This program will deliver individualized autism treatment that provides the intensity and flexibility of service to meet the individual needs of each child, regardless of his or her age.

We have heard from the autism community that as a government, we needed to do better for our kids. In response, we have developed a plan that will better support all children with autism, while providing additional supports to those families most affected by the transition to the new program.

1. We are cutting the implementation time in half. The implementation of the new Ontario Autism Program will now begin in June 2017.
2. We are providing additional direct funding available to families with children over five who are transitioning from the IBI waitlist and were originally offered \$8,000 to purchase supports. Successive payments will be provided in \$10,000 installments to purchase services based on their child's needs. This amount will be sufficient to support even the most intensive level of therapy for approximately 10 weeks. Alternatively, families can also choose to have their child receive immediate and continuous ABA services. Families will be eligible to receive continuous direct funding supports or ABA service until their child is able to enter the new program seamlessly.
3. We will provide families with greater access to information and one-on-one supports. We've set up a toll-free number at 1-888-284-8340 that families can call for general information and to be connected with their nearest ministry regional office cost-free and quickly.
4. We are delivering improved access to diagnostic assessments and services. This will help families get an autism diagnosis earlier so that their children can get the treatment they need sooner.

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5. We are working with the Ministry of Education to strengthen in-school supports, including the Connections Program, to help students transition into, and continue in, full-time school.

My ministry has established a new advisory committee of parents, stakeholders and experts to provide advice on the design and implementation of the new program. We will be engaging broadly with families and caregivers throughout this process to implement a program that is responsive to children's varying needs and delivered in a way that is helpful to families.

These enhancements will support children and youth with autism and their families. I am confident that these changes will make things easier and smoother for you as the new Ontario Autism Program is introduced.

If you would like additional information about the transition to the new program, please visit ontario.ca/autism or call 1-888-284-8340.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Coteau', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Michael Coteau
Minister