ONTABA Statement on Ministry of Education Announcement

March 13, 2019

Ontario’s Minister of Education is compounding what is already a dire situation for children and youth with ASD and their families.

The Ontario Association for Behaviour Analysis (ONTABA) unequivocally supports that all children and youth should have access to quality education. We are concerned, however, that our colleagues in education are now tasked with providing intervention that requires many years of specialized training, while at the same time meeting the demands of the curriculum and other students. We are concerned that teachers and educational assistants will be expected to provide intensive intervention that some children and youth need in a system that is not designed or equipped to support it.

Children with autism entering the school system in the immediate future are unlikely to have access to appropriate supports. Teachers and educational assistants will need to spend significant amounts of time assisting the newly enrolled students with autism. The funding slated to accompany these newly enrolled students will not be sufficient to cover associated staffing costs, even if the Premier reverses his decision that now prevents schools from hiring. More importantly, this plan fails to address concerns for the safety of children with autism who are forced to transition to school before they have the necessary prerequisite skills.

Money being earmarked by the Ministry to provide online training and allocating one PA day for teachers, educational assistants, and school staff on ASD-specific content is woefully insufficient. This level of training cannot and should not replace the highly specialized education and supervised practice of individuals who provide behaviour analytic services. Downloading this specialized intervention onto teachers and EAs in the classroom is not the solution for the funding cuts to intensive ABA treatment.

We acknowledge and agree with statements from ETFO, Autism Ontario, Ontario Principals’ Council, OPSEU, Ontario Autism Coalition, and others that school is not a replacement for therapy.

ONTABA is calling upon the Ministry of Education to collaborate with experts, educators, parents, school boards and the Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services. Meaningful consultations with stakeholders and an inter-ministerial approach are necessary to adequately support children with ASD in Ontario to prevent harmful outcomes.
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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