

# MPP Arnott takes local concerns to legislature

The Government has a responsibility to support all children with autism and provide them with the therapy they need to succeed, says Wellington-Halton Hills MPP Ted Arnott.

On May 13, Arnott and Wellington-Halton Hills MP Michael Chong met in Georgetown with a number of local families who have children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), who expressed their concerns over the Ontario Government's decision to limit funding for Intensive Behavioural Intervention (IBI) therapy.

Arnott took their concerns directly to the floor of the Ontario Legislature, raising their concerns directly with the government in Question Period on May 17. He shared the story of David and Linda Galvao of Georgetown, and their sons Toby and Luke.

David and Linda Galvao's sons Toby and Luke both have ASD, Arnott told the Deputy Premier.

Their older son Toby began IBI therapy at age 6, and within 30 days he went from being non-verbal, to speaking and even reciting the alphabet. Their younger son Luke has been on the IBI waitlist for 3 years, and is now 6.

Under the government's plan to ration IBI therapy, Luke would be denied the chance to reach his full potential, the same chance that IBI therapy, at age 6, gave to his brother Toby, Arnott informed the Deputy Premier.

Under the Liberals plan, the government will limit funding for IBI therapy to children between the ages of two and four. Families with children five years of age or older who are currently on the wait list for IBI therapy will have their names removed from the list and receive a one-time payment



TED ARNOTT

of \$8,000.

How can this government be so heartless as to say to the Galvao family that their older son has a future, but their younger son is on his own? Arnott asked the Deputy Premier.

Arnott's question came on the same day Ontario PC Leader Patrick Brown brought forward an opposition day motion in the Legislature calling on the Government to restore funding for IBI therapy for children over the age of five.

Our Ontario PC Caucus has been very vocal about our opposition to the government's decision to limit autism funding, Arnott said.

After all the billions of dollars they've wasted, how can they turn their backs on these children? Arnott asked afterwards.

After Question Period, Arnott thanked those who attended the May 13 meeting for stepping up and making their voices heard.

I want to thank Jennifer Hicks for initiating the meeting and helping to bring all the parents together last week, Arnott said after Question Period.

I also want to thank everyone for coming to meet with us and sharing their stories.

One of the attendees at the meeting was Freya Hunter, a therapist in Fergus who treats autistic children.

Ms. Hunter raised a number of great points in our discussion, Arnott said. She questioned whether there were other alternatives the Government could have considered, such as requiring insurance companies to provide coverage for autism as part of their benefit plans.

Arnott also thanked Chong for taking part in the meeting as well. Even though he's extremely busy these days, I was glad that Mike took the time to join us and show his interest and concern in this important issue, Arnott said.

## Prospect Park receives new, unique equipment

Working with a local resident, the Town is pleased to announce Prospect Park in Acton has re-opened and features some new playground equipment.

The playground features a Spinmee roundabout, zipline, large play structure with a variety of unique climbers and slides, rubber surfacing area, a variety of different swings including an inclusive swing and group saucer swing and benches.

There was significant public input into the design and we would like to give a special thanks to Annetrista for her contribution to the Spinmee Round-A bout, said Mayor Rick Bonnette. This playground is a great addition to Prospect Park which

will be enjoyed by families for years to come.

A local resident, Annetrista Absalom, published a children's book entitled *We Are More Alike Than We Are Different*. The book promotes the independent spirit of special needs children while at play. Town staff worked with Annetrista to find playground equipment that is specifically designed for those in a wheelchair while still meeting all the necessary safety guidelines. It is the first of its kind to be installed in Canada and is a part of the new playground in Prospect Park. Proceeds from Annetrista's book sales went towards the project.



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