

Paul Brigg. DELANEY, Bob I.

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Melanie Palaypayon with her son Xavier on the porch of their Mississauga home. Xavier lives with autism and his mother, Melanie is fighting for funding IBI therapy. Photo by Lucas Oleniuk/TorStar Network

MPP apologizes for calling cops on mother of autistic child

By Roger Belgrave
[@belgrave1](#)

Mississauga MPP Bob Delaney has personally apologized to the mother of an autistic boy after the politician's office called police on the woman who planned to protest changes to the Ontario Autism Program outside his constituency office.

The Mississauga-Streetsville MPP said he spoke with Melanie Palaypayon Wednesday over the phone.

"I said I was profoundly sorry for the circumstances that resulted in the police visiting her home and for the anxiety this has caused her and her family, and offered her an unreserved apology, which she accepted," Delaney said in an email to The News that was very similar to a written statement he issued earlier in the week.

Premier Kathleen Wynne said Tuesday that she had asked him to issue an apology, but Delaney had already decided to contact the family.

Palaypayon is like many parents who are upset with the Liberal government's decision to end their children's government-assisted access to Intensive Behavioural Intervention (IBI) treatment after age 5.

For families that have waited years to access what can prove to be life-altering IBI therapy. For autistic children and those who will see the government's financial support for the costly treatment cut off, the program change is devastating news.

And like many parents, Palaypayon was planning to raise her MPP's and the public's awareness about the impact on thousands



Bob Delaney

of children by handing out information pamphlets outside the local constituency office last Friday.

She cancelled those plans after police told her Friday morning she could protest, but was not allowed to touch Delaney's office door.

According to Delaney, he, his staff and local service provider ErinoakKids have had several conversations with Palaypayon over the last few months and he understands the concerns the mother has raised.

"As an MPP, I understand how important it is to listen to the concerns of my constituent," he said. "Mrs. Palaypayon and I hope to discuss her concerns in greater detail with the staff at ErinoakKids."

According to Palaypayon, Delaney's secretary initially called to book an appointment for her to come in and receive an apology.

However, Palaypayon thought it was absurd he couldn't call himself.

She eventually reached Delaney by phone when she called the office later.

Palaypayon said she accepted Delaney's apology, but rejected the MPP's insistence that he has done all he can for her 6-year-old autistic son Xavier.

"I told him...you haven't done anything for us," she remarked and pointed out he voted against a recent opposition party motion, tabled in the legislature, to undo the program changes.

She has agreed to meet with Delaney to discuss the issue further.

"I told him to tell Kathleen Wynne that Xavier needs an IBI," Palaypayon.