



OTTAWA-CARLETON  
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

*Office of the Chair of the Board*

8 March 2019

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson  
Minister of Education  
22nd Floor, Mowat Block  
900 Bay Street  
Toronto, ON M7A 1L2

Hon. Lisa MacLeod  
Minister of Children, Community and Social Services  
6th Floor, Hepburn Block  
80 Grosvenor Street  
Toronto, ON M7A 1E9

Dear Ministers Thompson and MacLeod:

On behalf of the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB), I write to express our significant concerns about the planned changes to the Ontario Autism Program (OAP), the current timeline for implementing those changes, and the potential impact of those changes on the supports that our school district provides to meet the needs of students on the autism spectrum.

When these changes were being considered, I am not sure if you were fully aware that some students currently receive intensive clinical therapy off-site for all or part of the school week, and attend school for various amounts of time and on various schedules only when they are not in therapy. Families are still trying to sort out the best way forward when their child's funding for therapy runs out, and we anticipate that a growing number of very high-needs students could be received in our schools full-time between 1 April and 30 June. Our schools and classrooms are hard-pressed to serve the autism support needs of the children already attending school full-or part time. The arrival of additional students still in need of therapy that schools do not provide will impact our ability to resource our schools, and the loss of the intensive support will have a detrimental effect on the progress of the students with autism.

While I was pleased to learn that the Ministry of Education is beginning to ask school districts about the numbers of students expected to be transitioning from off-site clinical therapy into schools for greater amounts of time, I must emphasize that school districts need time to plan the transition properly and sufficient time and funding to establish the necessary supports for each student. We therefore ask you to consider modifying the

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current implementation of the changes to allow more time and ensure adequate and appropriate supports will be in place in schools.

OCDSB trustees support the position of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) as expressed to you in its letter dated 26 February 2019. We strongly encourage both of you to meet with OPSBA representatives at your earliest opportunity, to discuss the needs of school boards across the province with respect to ensuring students with autism receive supports that meet their needs.

A meeting with Minister MacLeod at the earliest possible time is hereby requested, as I would greatly appreciate an opportunity to directly share more details of how the planned changes to the Ontario Autism Program will impact our schools and our students with autism at the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board.

Sincerely,



Lynn Scott  
Chair, Ottawa-Carleton District School Board

c.c. All Trustees  
Senior Staff  
Corporate Records