



MEMORANDUM

Memo No. 19-098

TO: Trustees
Student Trustees

FROM: Camille Williams-Taylor, Director of Education and Secretary of the Board
Peter Symmonds, Superintendent of Learning Support Services

DATE: 6 September 2019

RE: **Update Regarding the Ontario Autism Program**

This memo provides an update to trustees regarding the Ontario Autism Program (OAP). In the winter/spring of 2019, the Ministries of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) and Education made several announcements regarding changes to the OAP. Additional information can be found in OCDSB Trustee Memo 19-043: Impact of Changes to Ontario Autism Program and OCDSB Trustee Memo 19-051: Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services - Ontario Autism Program Announcement (see attached). There has been considerable discussion regarding the proposed changes but very few details have been provided by the Ministry.

On 30 May 2019, MCCSS established the Ontario Autism Advisory Panel comprised of parents of children with autism, clinicians, autism self-advocates, service providers, former public servants, and others who have knowledge and experience with autism. Subsequently, Todd Smith, Minister of MCCSS, announced that the Ontario Autism Advisory Panel would be reviewing the results of the provincial consultation as well as considering relevant evidence, science and data. The panel will use this information to develop recommendations and offer their advice regarding a needs-based, sustainable OAP by the end of the summer.

Minister Smith also announced the extension of existing behaviour plans for students for a second six-month period. Families with children who are not already receiving services under the previous OAP will continue to be eligible for funding from the government as the province develops a needs-based program.

While the recommendations and advice from the advisory panel is scheduled to be released by the end of the summer, it is anticipated that the new OAP will be in place by April 2020. Staff are hopeful that sufficient lead time will be provided so that we are able to plan for any changes that may impact students attending the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB).

Finally on 13 August 2019, Minister Smith announced plans to begin a consultation process on the regulation of behavioural clinicians who provide Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA). Regulation of ABA behavioural clinicians will set standard expectations for quality therapy across the province.

As a result of the two announcements to extend existing behaviour plans, the OCDSB has not seen an influx of students entering the school system as was originally expected. While this is a period of uncertainty for families who continue to monitor potential changes to their funding models, families continue to have to make decisions regarding the various options available to support their child (e.g., full-time school, part-time school, therapy, etc.).

Further, while Learning Support Services continues to monitor and assess the impact of the government announcements, no changes have been made to the range of special education programs and services to support students with autism in the OCDSB.

Staff will provide updates to trustees as more information becomes available.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Peter Symmonds at peter.symmonds@ocdsb.ca

Attach.

cc Senior Staff
 Manager, Board Services
 Special Education Advisory Committee
 Corporate Records