



Durham District School Board  
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April 26, 2019

The Honourable Lisa Thompson  
 Minister of Education  
 Mowat Block, 22<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
 900 Bay Street  
 Toronto, ON M7A 1L2

The Honourable Christine Elliott  
 Deputy Premier and  
 Minister of Health and Long-Term Care  
 Hepburn Block, 10th Floor  
 80 Grosvenor St.  
 Toronto, ON M7A 1E9

The Honourable Lisa MacLeod  
 Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services  
 438 University Avenue, 7th floor  
 Toronto, ON M7A 1N3

Dear Ministers:

**Re: Proposed Changes to the Ontario Autism Program Funding**

The Durham District School Board's Special Education Advisory Committee writes this letter to express its concerns with respect to the proposed changes to the provincial funding model for the Ontario Autism Program ("OAP"), and the impacts those changes will have on children, families and school boards.

Should the changes to the OAP go ahead as proposed, many children will be entering the school system who have significant needs, requiring specialized programming, care and supports far beyond what is able to be provided in a traditional classroom. Integration of these extremely vulnerable children will require significant pre-planning, involving a multi-disciplinary team to ensure that their needs, and the needs of all students in the classroom, are being met. In order to ensure these needs are met, school boards will need to be provided with specific details of the changes that will occur and provided with enough lead time to ensure that the proper programming and supports can be put in place prior to the student entering the classroom.

We are also concerned that the funding models, as they currently exist, for special education are insufficient to cover the true costs of providing the level of support that these students will require. We ask if the Ministry will commit adjusting the funding models for special education to the current-day enrolment of students who are identified to ensure that all students will have adequate access to the supports they need to be successful.



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In order to provide an inclusive, welcoming and supportive environment for all students, it is important that any changes to the OAP take into consideration how school boards will be supported in providing for the needs of these exceptional children. Given the ripple-effects of the decisions of these ministries, it is imperative that the ministries work together to consider how changes being made within their respective portfolios affect the others.

In conclusion, we ask that each ministry take the necessary time required to allow for proper consultation, planning and transitioning to ensure that decisions made do not negatively impact the needs of any of our students.

Yours truly,



Eva Kyriakides  
SEAC Chair  
Durham District School Board

cc: Chairs of Ontario Special Education Advisory Committees  
Lisa Millar, Director of Education, DDSB  
Andrea McAuley, Superintendent, Inclusive Student Services  
Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy, MPP  
Lorne Coe, MPP  
Jennifer French, MPP  
Lindsay Park, MPP  
Hon. Rod Phillips, MPP  
Hon. Laurie Scott, MPP

