



OTTAWA-CARLETON
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Office of the Chair of the Board

April 23, 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:

Further to my letter dated 8 March 2019, I am writing to you on behalf of the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) to express our continuing concerns regarding future supports for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

On 22 March 2019, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) announced several amendments to the proposed Ontario Autism Program, including commitments to hold broader consultations, to explore how best to provide additional supports to families based on the diagnosed needs of their child, to allow all children who currently have an OAP Behaviour Plan to continue their plan until its end date, and to allow families to renew the plan for 6 months after the plan ends. As much as we appreciate that these amendments allow for additional dialogue and additional planning and transition time for families and school districts, we remain concerned about the OCDSB's ability to provide meaningful education and adequate supports for students with ASD in our schools. This concern is rooted in part in the significant funding changes for the provision of autism services announced by the Minister of Education on 11 March 2019, in *Enhancing Education Support: A Plan for Students with Autism*.

Members of the OCDSB's Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) are concerned that the proposed funding is insufficient and will not allow school boards to adequately staff positions that support students with ASD, in particular, (i) professional support staff (i.e., Psychologists and Speech Language Pathologists), (ii) educational assistants, (iii) Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA) coordinators, (iv) Registered Behavioural Technicians (RBTs), and (v) Board Certified Behaviour Analysts (BCBAs).

Our SEAC is also significantly concerned with the scope of professional learning and online training outlined in the Minister Thompson's announcement. SEAC members believe that additional ASD-specific training is required beyond the ASD Additional Qualifications Course to support the implementation and monitoring of the learning. The online training outlined in the Minister's announcement should be made available to all school board staff, including educational assistants, early childhood educators, teachers and school administrators.

OCDSB trustees and SEAC members support the position of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) as expressed to you in its letter dated 26 February 2019. In addition, on 26 March 2019, the OCDSB approved a policy resolution for OPSBA that included recommendations for funding for staffing and funding to continue targeted autism programs. This resolution has been submitted to OPSBA for consideration at its Annual General Meeting in July 2019.

We are appreciative of the Ministers' commitment to continue consultation, as further dialogue is required among the provincial government, families, school boards, SEACs, OPSBA and service providers to find a solution that can meet the government's objectives while providing adequate care and support for students with ASD. Together, we all share the goal of ensuring that Ontario's publicly funded education system is sustainable and meets the needs of all students.

In my previous letter, I requested a meeting with Minister MacLeod at her earliest convenience, and I reiterate that request here. We feel strongly that an opportunity to discuss the planned changes to the Ontario Autism program and their impact on our students and our schools will be helpful to the Minister as she moves forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lynn Scott". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lynn" and last name "Scott" clearly distinguishable.

Lynn Scott
Chair, Board of Trustees
Ottawa-Carleton District School Board

c.c. All Trustees
Special Education Advisory Committee
Senior Staff
Corporate Records