



Association des directions  
et directions adjointes des  
écoles franco-ontariennes



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March 1, 2019

The Honourable Lisa Thompson  
Minister of Education  
Mowat Block 22nd Floor  
900 Bay Street  
Toronto, ON  
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Dear Minister,

We know that you are committed to the learning and safety of all Ontario students and, as school leaders, we share that commitment.

Following the government's recent announcement regarding changes to funding for children and youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), we are very concerned about the impact those changes will have on students and staff in our schools. Principals across the province are receiving calls and emails from parents whose children currently attend school for a small portion of the week (as little as one-half day), while spending the majority of their time in community-based or private intensive IBI or ABA therapy with professionals who specialize in this therapy. With the significant reduction in funding for these families, these children will no longer have access to that therapy. As such, parents have begun to advise principals that, as of April 1, their children will need to attend school on a full-time basis, or for significantly longer than they currently do.

With the current funding envelope available to school boards from the ministry, schools will not be able to meet the additional and/or more intensive learning, safety and behavioural needs of these vulnerable students, who require intensive therapy, often in a one-on-one setting. Most school staff do not have the necessary medical and professional training to treat, teach or manage this highly specialized group of students.

We have a number of questions about the impact of the ASD policy decision:

1. What additional financial resources, over and above the current funding for special education, will be made available to schools to meet the increasing number and needs of the students who will now be spending more time in our schools?

2. What additional human resources will be made available to schools, in the form of professionally trained therapists, medical personnel and Educational Assistants, to meet the needs of these students? Moreover, how do we ensure that we have a supply of qualified, French language education professionals to meet the needs of these French speaking ASD students?
3. Is it the expectation of the ministry that these ASD students will be integrated into classrooms? If so, what supports and training will be provided to teachers to ensure they can provide a safe, appropriate learning environment?
4. If the expectation is that these ASD students will be in congregated classrooms, what additional supports will be provided to schools that have space limitations?
5. How will schools ensure that ASD students are safe, when many of them require personalized support, attention and supervision that is not currently available in classrooms and schools?

We are continuing to collect data from schools regarding the potential challenges this new policy poses and possible solutions that may help this transition be successful for ASD students and each affected school community. We will share this information and data with you and your ministry officials. Indeed, we remain willing and able to meet with you directly to discuss solutions.

Due to the limited information available from the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services since the policy changes were announced, the education community needs direction on these critical issues before the changes take effect so that we can ensure we have the necessary resources to provide a safe, appropriate, meaningful, engaging and well-supervised learning environment in every school.

If the necessary resources are not or will not be available by April 1, then we urge the government to delay the implementation of this decision until it can ensure that schools will be able to meet their legislative responsibilities for all students and, more importantly, so that together we can ensure that every student can reach their full potential.

Sincerely,



Patrick Venne  
President, ADFO



Jennifer Yust  
President, CPCO



Larry O'Malley  
President, OPC

cc: The Honourable Lisa MacLeod  
Marit Stiles, MPP  
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