

**Ontario Principals' Council Response to Statement by Minister Lisa Thompson
Supports for ASD Students
March 11, 2019**

We were pleased to hear this morning's announcement responding to some of our and our education partners' concerns around supporting students with ASD who will be spending more time in schools after April 1.

Last week, the ministry asked boards to identify what resources are needed for these students. As soon as we have the benefit of this information, we will need to turn our collective attention to what additional funding will be necessary.

We await further details about the intention to expand and fund the after-school ASD skills development program across the province in the 2019-2020 school year. These programs will be dependent on whether there are enough specially trained individuals, both English- and French-speaking, who are available, especially in remote communities, to lead them.

The commitment to additional Professional Development is welcome, as a day of training will help educators better understand and support the needs of these students. However, we must remember that we are educators, not therapists. The purpose of this training should not be to have educators deliver the professional therapy these children have been receiving outside of school.

We want the full integration of these students to be successful. We want to work with the government and our education partners to identify the necessary resources to do so. While steps are being taken, there is more work to be done to tackle these issues quickly, since April 1 is fast approaching, and it is in all our interests to ensure all of our students can reach their full potential.