



Ontario Catholic School
Trustees' Association

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March 1, 2019

MEMORANDUM

TO: Chairpersons and Directors of Education
- All Catholic District School Boards

FROM: Beverley Eckensweiler, President

SUBJECT: **Changes to the Government's Autism Program**

As you may be aware, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services has recently announced substantial changes to the Ontario Autism Program in an effort to reduce wait times for various psychological services and behavioural supports. In summary, the key features of the new Autism Program include:

- Establishing a “childhood budget” for families with children with an Autism diagnosis. This will provide families with funding until their child is 18 years old to a maximum of \$140,000.
- Families will be able to purchase services with this new childhood budget from providers of their choice on a fee for service basis.
- Increasing the number of diagnostic centres.
- Establishing an independent intake agency.
- Increasing oversight and regulation of service providers.

The government also indicated that the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services would work with the Ministry of Education to provide transition services and supports to children entering the school system through the “Connections for Students” program. This program is a student specific and school based transition team that work with service providers and families prior to a child entering the school system as he or she leaves intensive behavioural therapy programs.

Impacts on School Boards:

A number of issues have been raised by this new Autism program and its potential impact on school boards. For example, how many students will enter the school system requiring additional supports who were receiving behavioral services in community agencies? With special education resources and funding challenges currently faced by boards, gaining a better understanding of the potential impacts on boards will be key to ensuring the Ministry of Education addresses those challenges.

In order to assist OCSTA's advocacy efforts, please inform us of any specific concerns about the new Autism program. Once we gather sufficient feedback from boards, OCSTA will follow up with the Ministry of Education to share those concerns and possible recommendations for action. Please send your responses to Steve Andrews at sandrews@ocsta.on.ca.

If you have any questions, please contact Steve Andrews or myself.

PROMOTING AND PROTECTING CATHOLIC EDUCATION