



Tuesday, October 26, 2021

Amanda Flentjar, Regional Coordinator

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To: Honourable Jennifer Whiteside, Minister of Education

Victoria, BC

EDUC.Minister@gov.bc.ca & Jennifer.Whiteside.MLA@leg.bc.ca

Subject: Changes to BC Online Schools

Dear Honourable Jennifer Whiteside,

Thank you for meeting with our team on Thursday to discuss the upcoming changes to BC's Online School, which will impact BC's autism community. We appreciated being able to share our concerns and those of our 7,000+ members.

As discussed during our meeting, our staff receives nearly 10,000 requests for autism information, resources, and support per year. Our website receives almost 90,000 visits from community members seeking knowledge and learning. The upcoming changes to the education system undoubtedly impact our work supporting our community's information needs as they represent more than 11% of the IDL student population. We remain eager to stay informed to support our members, the autism community and all families through this transition. We hope that your Ministry will consider and treat AutismBC as a community partner that can assist in policy growth, community consultation and smooth policy transitions. As you stated it the meeting more consultation is needed before rolling out changes to independent schools. We appreciate, will support and engage in opportunities to create a clear path for questions and continued community engagement. We aim to assist in supporting all families understand new policies and process'. As we stated in our meeting and supported with our survey of over 300 members there is great concern about the timeline of new policy implementation, specifically for independent schools and students in designated special education categories' like L2G – Autism.

We recognize these are difficult decisions to make and appreciate your commitment to improving access to quality services for all BC families. We appreciate your acknowledgment in our meeting that postponing new policy implementation with independent schools may be the best way forward. While the upcoming changes bring stress and anxiety, they also bring hope that families will be better served, and children will have better opportunities to thrive. Thank you again for the opportunity to discuss our interest in opening the channels of communication and receiving timely information to support and inform the Online School transition.



We look forward to your future communications on this matter.

Sincerely,

Amanda Flentjar

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