MEMORANDUM TO: Directors of Education
Director of Provincial Schools Branch
Supervisory Officer Centre Jules-Léger
Supervisory Officers and Secretary-Treasurers of School Authorities

FROM: George Zegarac
Assistant Deputy Minister
Strategic Planning and Elementary/Secondary Programs Division

DATE: August 14, 2006

SUBJECT: Training Teachers’ Assistants to work with students with Pervasive Development Disorders/Autism Spectrum Disorders (PDD/ASD)

Improving Ontario’s education system is the government’s highest priority and the Ministry of Education is focused on three goals: high levels of student achievement; reduced gaps in student achievement; and increased public confidence and support for public education.

On June 8, 2006, the Ministry of Education announced additional funding to further demonstrate its commitment to foster student success. I am pleased to advise you that the Ministry has provided the Geneva Centre for Autism with a grant of $5 million for training Teachers’ Assistants to work with students with Pervasive Developmental Disorders/Autism Spectrum Disorders (PDD/ASD). On behalf of Geneva Centre for Autism, I invite you to work with them to develop training that will meet your local needs.

The government recognizes that school boards need to provide appropriate special education programs and services to an increased number of students with PDD/ASD who have diverse needs. School boards report that many students with PDD/ASD receive the support of Teachers’ Assistants and that there is a need to provide additional training opportunities to enhance their knowledge and skills in effectively supporting students with PDD/ASD in schools. Geneva Centre for Autism has indicated that this training project will target Teachers’ Assistants who work or may potentially work with students with PDD/ASD.

Over the next two school years (2006/07 and 2007/08), Geneva Centre for Autism, recognized as one of Canada’s leading service providers in the field of autism, has committed to use these funds to design and deliver training that focuses on local needs and service delivery models. The Geneva Centre project will complement professional development opportunities currently provided by school boards and the joint Ministry of Education and Children and Youth Services’ School Support Program- ASD.

1 The term Teachers’ Assistants is used throughout this document, but also includes Educational Assistants, Education Resource Worker or other individuals who provide support to students with PDD/ASD.
I encourage school boards to work with the Geneva Centre to assist in meeting their training objectives. The Geneva Centre has asked school boards to provide the name of an individual in each school board who can identify their training needs. The Geneva Centre will be contacting school board delegates later this fall.

Should you have any questions regarding this initiative, please contact Debbie Irish, Manager, Special Projects, Geneva Centre for Autism at dirish@autism.net or 416-322-7877 ext. 322.

This is an exciting opportunity to further support students with PDD/ASD in school settings. Working together, we can help more students to achieve success.

George Zegarac
Assistant Deputy Minister

c.c.  Margaret Whelan, Executive Director, Geneva Centre for Autism