

EICS BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Monthly Highlights



Schools led their own Faith and Wellness Days throughout March with a focus on holistic well-being.
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New three-year capital plan to seek funding to revitalize infrastructure

A new short-term **three-year capital plan** approved by the Elk Island Catholic Schools (EICS) Board of Trustees at their March meeting represents a first step to obtain funding as the division seeks to plan for and gain feedback on the future in communities where we are blessed to serve students.

This approved three-year plan addresses current needs including close proximity to school for EICS students, efficient use of

schools and their resources, and an advocacy tool to help address the division's most pressing infrastructure needs. Primarily, this document is the vehicle that the division hopes will enable the necessary provincial funding to proceed with addressing current needs in Fort Saskatchewan and to begin examining the future makeup of EICS in additional communities.

EICS administration submitted the three-year plan along with an updated

10-year facility plan in a joint document to Alberta Education at the end of March – in time for the province's April 1 deadline to submit funding requests for Alberta's 2025 fiscal year budget.

Edmonton Public School Board (EPSB) was contracted by EICS to develop this plan as EPSB is very highly regarded for its accuracy in terms of projecting future student enrolment based on current enrolment and municipal development

trends. In creating the EICS three-year capital plan and 10-year facility plan, EPSB reviewed the division's long-term enrolment projections and facilities plan, as well as the economic diversity, growth potential, long-range regional plans, and future development projects of each municipality where EICS has a school.

"Elk Island Catholic was in need of a revitalized capital plan. In our project advocacy meetings with

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Board Highlights

Finding beauty can inspire faith and personal formation

March's Faith Formation was led by Stefan Johnson, the principal at École Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic School.

Johnson spoke about the *Via Pulchritudinis* -- or the Path of Beauty -- and how humans are made to respond to beauty whether they experience it in nature, art, or other means. Using Michelangelo's La Pieta as an example of beauty, Johnson called upon the Trustees to consider where and how they seek beauty and what role it plays in their personal formation.

his appreciation for the positive feedback his staff of three received from the survey, and noted that they are continually seeking methods to streamline their support of EICS staff.

The department has also settled new contracts with four unions (including the Alberta Teachers' Association), as well as recently concluded the mediation process with the Local 1961 chapter of the Canadian Union of Public Employees.

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Above: St. Mary's Catholic School students Keira and Ethan led the Trustees in the opening prayer and land acknowledgement during March's Public Board of Trustees meeting. Below: École OLPH Principal Stefan Johnson speaks to role of seeing beauty everywhere as part of our personal formation.



HUMAN RESOURCES UPDATE

Brett Cox, the EICS Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources, shared successes and challenges faced by his department and key relevant information from this year's EICS Education Assurance Survey.

Overall, he offered

2023-2024 BOARD OF TRUSTEES



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Board Highlights

Fee checks and balances

TRUSTEES from Page 2 REVIEWED POLICIES

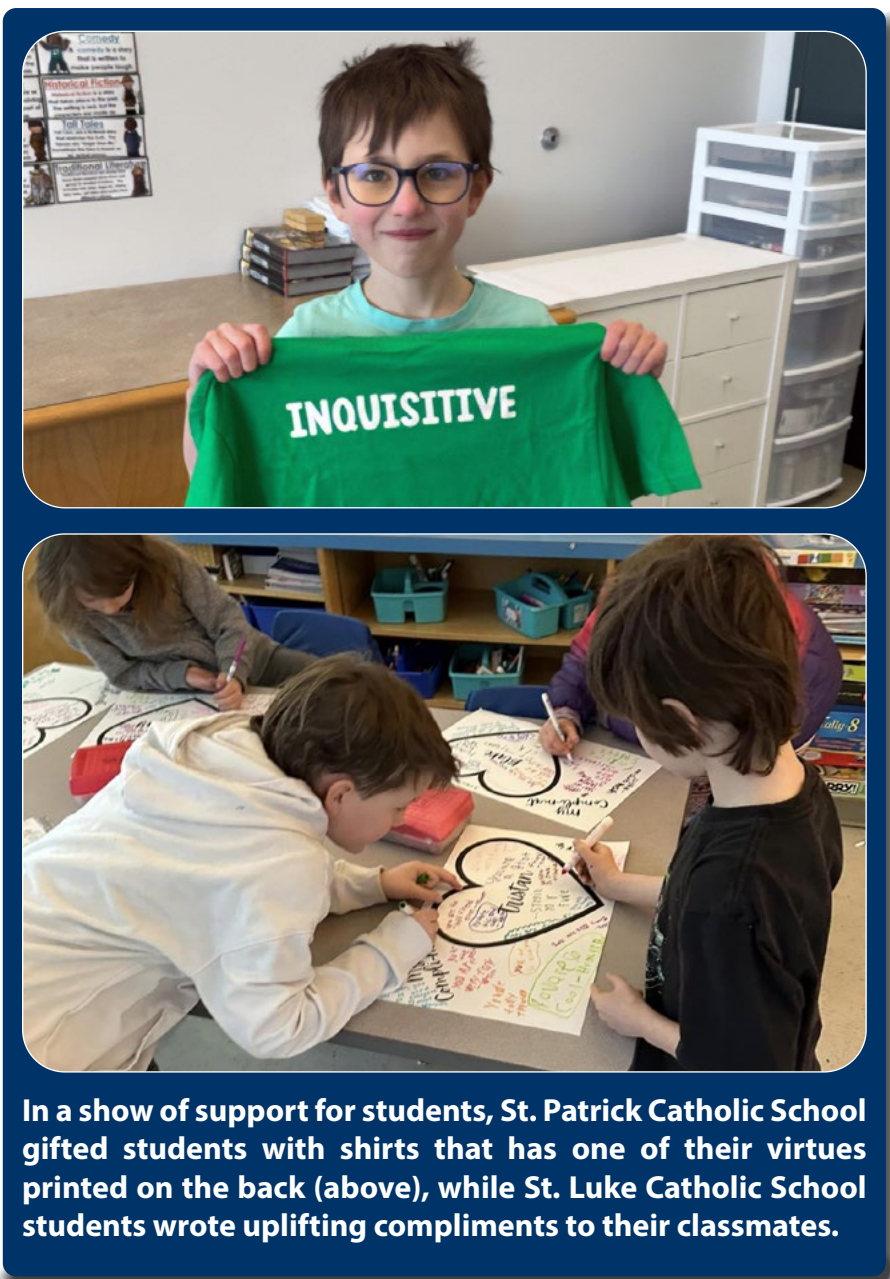
Looking to the 2024-2025 school year, the Board of Trustees had their attention focused on policies regarding school fees and fee regulation.

Policy 21: School Fees and Charges was revised at the meeting to include references to guardians where parents are also mentioned. Trustees also approved a recommendation to delete a reference to an expired section of the *Alberta School Fees Regulation*, which previously required board of trustees approval for year-to-year school fee increases that are more than five percent.

Tracy Leigh, the EICS Secretary-Treasurer noted that division admin continues to maintain strict checks and balances to ensure fee changes are properly vetted and that sufficient evidence is provided by the school to support the request before it's submitted to Trustees for consideration each year.

Now that the policy has been reviewed, proposed school fee changes for the upcoming year will be considered later this spring.

Each month, the EICS Board of Trustees' Policy Committee reviews specific policies and either recommends revising them or leaving them as they are.



In a show of support for students, St. Patrick Catholic School gifted students with shirts that has one of their virtues printed on the back (above), while St. Luke Catholic School students wrote uplifting compliments to their classmates.

Superintendent's Report

2023-2024 EDUCATION ASSURANCE DATA

Every February, EICS asks parents, staff, students, and other stakeholders to provide their input on how well they feel we are doing in delivery of Catholic Education.

Divided into four themes

(Faith Integration, Learners and Learning, Systemic Wellness, and Community Engagement), the feedback received is compiled and released on the EICS website through the **Assurance Dashboard**.

This input is vital to planning our delivery of

Catholic Education for future years.

Schools and the EICS Central Leadership Team are building their assurance plans for the 2024-2025 school year, and will present them to the Senior Leadership Team in April.

ACTIVE SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT UPDATE

The EICS Superintendent team is continuing its Active School Engagements with administration at all of our school sites to discuss the year so far and their assurance plans.

Board Highlights

Capital plan designed to put EICS in best position for funding

PLAN from Page 1

Alberta Education and Infrastructure, they informed us that our previous capital plans do not provide sufficient documentation nor solutions to warrant provincial funding," said EICS Superintendent Paul Corrigan.

When proposing a funding request, school divisions must provide details regarding building conditions, functionality and programming, enrolment pressures, community renewal, and other details. School divisions are also expected to propose solutions to resolve their needs. Depending on what's proposed, Alberta Education will categorize it into one of four funding programs: Pre-Planning, Planning, Design, or Construction.

"With the amount of capital funding requests Alberta Education receives from school districts across the province each year, it has set a very high bar to obtain funding for pre-planning and planning – let alone construction dollars for school modernization or a new school," Corrigan noted. "Our new capital plan is designed to clear this first bar so we can begin planning wider consultation with our communities. It clearly identifies our needs and provides consideration of what the potential solutions could be to best address the existing and future needs of

our communities."

Should the division's funding request be included in the 2025 provincial budget, it would enable EICS to begin the first steps of community engagement via value scoping in Sherwood Park and Vegreville in the coming years, and begin the planning stage in Fort Saskatchewan to address ageing school infrastructure.

"Input from our parents and staff are vital to our way forward in building a more sustainable future for Elk Island Catholic Schools in each of our communities," said Board Chair Le-Ann Ewaskiw. "We know the future may hold difficult conversations with each of our communities, but these conversations are vital to the health of our division and our ability to provide the level of quality Catholic Education that we are so well known for."

The EICS capital plan is requesting funding to support three needs, as listed in order of priority:

- A Planning and Design funding request to combine Our Lady of the Angels and St. John XXIII Catholic schools by building a new school on an existing school site or new site in Fort Saskatchewan. **See the potential options.**
- Begin value scoping in



Attendees at the second day of values scoping in February share their thoughts on potential solutions for a new EICS school in Fort Saskatchewan. Left to right: EICS Board Chair Le-An Ewaskiw, Fort Saskatchewan Mayor Gale Katchur, and EICS Trustee Al Stewart.

Sherwood Park once provincial funding is received and no earlier than 2025. The purpose would be to obtain community feedback and consider options that may include closing two schools with a long-term planning request to build a new school in Bremner or Cambrian.

- Begin value scoping in Vegreville after provincial funding is received and not before 2026 to obtain community feedback and consider options that could include consolidating St. Martin's and St. Mary's Catholic schools or reconfiguring their grades.

Outside of initial value scoping sessions held in Fort Saskatchewan earlier this year,

and the analysis conducted by EPSB, no additional action has been taken on these three priorities. Except for the new high school in Camrose that is planned to open in the fall of 2025, any potential grade reconfiguration, modernization, or new school in any EICS community is pending provincial funding and has no formal timeline.

10-YEAR FACILITY PLAN

In addition to the three-year capital plan, Trustees also reviewed a long-term 10-year plan. Once formalized, this plan would follow completion of the first three priorities identified above and could include reconfiguration, modernization, and a new school in rural Strathcona County, Bremner, and Cambrian.

Board News in Pictures



On Tuesday, April 2, members of the EICS Board of Trustees toured five schools in Strathcona County to meet with senior admin and learn about their successes and challenges. These tours are held in each community throughout the year.



Division News

Building Success: Cogito Academy expands to serve more students for 2024-2025 school year

Due to parent requests and the popularity of the program, Elk Island Catholic Schools' Cogito Academy has expanded to two additional schools for the 2024-2025 school year.

École Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic School (OLPH) in Sherwood Park and Our Lady of the Angels Catholic School (OLA) in Fort Saskatchewan have introduced Cogito Academy to their schools starting next year. Specifically, Cogito Academy is available for students Grades 5 and 6 at OLPH, and Kindergarten to Grade 4 at OLA.

"Cogito Academies are among the best schools in the province, and there always seem to be two or three in the top 10 schools in terms of Provincial Achievement Tests performance. That's something to take note of. Teaching students work ethic pays off," said OLPH Principal Stefan Johnson. "Our Cogito Academy will include a classical component, introducing our students to the best humanity has to offer, whether in science and math, or in the areas of literature, art, and history. This isn't just learning curriculum, or learning to work; it's transformative."



Cogito Academy is expanding to Lady of the Angels and École Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic schools for the 2024-2025 school year.

The academy's focused goal of delivering quality education is consistent with the academic excellence that all EICS schools strive to provide through their mainstream programs.

Enough interest in Cogito Academy was shown by OLPH parents that the school will open it a year early. One of the oldest schools in Sherwood Park, OLPH has established a reputation for quality English and French Immersion education and athletics programs. "Cogito Academy follows a tradition

of excellence that goes back decades, but in a new way," Johnson said.

By offering Cogito Academy in Fort Saskatchewan, OLA Principal Michele Yuzdepski said she is excited for parents to have a more active role in their child's learning journey. "The learning environment and instructional approach emphasizes structure and organization," she explained. "Like other successful Cogito academies, our focus is teaching work ethic, confidence, independence,

and mastery to prepare students for their futures. We are excited to offer this to families who are looking for this learning environment."

This school year, EICS successfully launched its first Cogito Academy program at Madonna Catholic School in Sherwood Park for Kindergarten to Grade 3. As is the case for all schools within EICS, students are not required to be Catholic to attend; all students are welcome.

More info is available at eics.ab.ca/cogito.

School News

Students, staff lead their own Faith and Wellness Days

Many of the schools in each of our communities celebrated Faith and Wellness Days in March by hosting a series of student- and teacher-led activities focused on spiritual, mental, and physical health.

These days are a testament to the Systemic Wellness pillar of our division's annual assurance plan and inspired by a series of Here Comes the Sun workshops that were attended by

student leadership teams from each of our schools in October 2023.

Unique to EICS, Here Comes the Sun is funded through a \$440,000 grant obtained by Alberta Education's Mental Health grant in 2023. It takes a cooperative approach to staff and student holistic well-being through partnerships with parish priests, Indigenous knowledge keepers, and the PEPY approach to balancing

physical, spiritual, and social health.

Through this support, students and staff have been

empowered to learn new ways to care for themselves in all facets of life now and into the future.



School News in Pictures

All EICS schools practiced alms-giving during the Lenten season. Food bank donations and blankets for a local women's shelter are two of the very many ways our students enacted the division theme Go Light Our World.



School News in Pictures



The start of the Easter season was marked across all of our schools in celebration of Christ's resurrection and the beginning of a renewed season of hope.



School News in Pictures

In March we celebrated the life and legacy of St. Patrick, a man who dedicated his life to spreading the love and teachings of Jesus. May we all be inspired by his example and strive to live our lives with the same love and compassion that he showed to others.



School News in Pictures



The month of March featured multiple special guests at our schools, including (clockwise from top): Joe Melendrez, a Catholic musician and inspirational speaker; Para snowboarder Lisa DeJong, a 2022 World Championships gold medallist and 2022 Paralympic Winter Games silver medallist; and Indigenous musician Curt Young.



School News in Pictures



The last two months have been big for some of our sports teams.

Left: The Archbishop Catholic High School curling team won the Alberta Schools' Athletic Association provincial curling championship and the Metro Athletics championship.

Bottom Right: The ABJ junior boys basketball team won the Metro Athletics championship.

Bottom Left: The St. Theresa Catholic School junior boys basketball team won the Elk Island Junior High Athletics championship.



School News in Pictures



Madonna Catholic School's Grade 2 students had a wonderful visit and tour of St. Josaphat's Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral and Museum in Edmonton during March where they learned all about Easter and Lent as followed by the Byzantine Rite. They also had the opportunity to learn more about Ukrainian Easter traditions and create their own Pysanky cookies.

Trustee Event Calendar for April

April 2
Trustees tour of schools
in Strathcona County

Ukrainian Catholic
Eparchy of Edmonton

Trustees' Association

April 5
Fort Saskatchewan
Chamber Luncheon
featuring Mayor
Gale Katchur

April 10-25
EICS School and
Department Assurance
Presentations

April 20
St. Joseph College's
Breakfast fundraiser

April 9
Board Advocacy Dinner
Meeting with Bishop
David Motiuk of the

April 13
Young Authors' Conference

April 25
Theology on Tap
at Headquarters
Restaurant and Bar

April 15
MLA Reception hosted by
the Alberta Catholic School

April TBD
Virtual Meeting with
City of Camrose

**JOIN US AT OUR
NEXT PUBLIC
BOARD MEETING**

Wednesday, April 17
1 p.m.
EICS CLS Office
310 Broadview Road
Sherwood Park, Alberta

**Visit our website for
meeting agendas and
minutes.**



*Catholic-integrated education from
Kindergarten to Grade 12 in the communities
of Camrose, Fort Saskatchewan, Sherwood
Park, Strathcona County, and Vegreville.*

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at our division!

