

May 30, 2024

Honourable Demetrios Nicolaides
Minister of Education
228 Legislature Building
10800 - 97 Avenue
Edmonton, AB
T5K 2B6

via email: education.minister@gov.ab.ca

Dear Minister Nicolaides:

The Board of Trustees of Elk Island Catholic Schools would like to thank you for your dedication to our students and your commitment to making Alberta a world class education system. In order to achieve this goal, sustainable funding to school boards is absolutely essential.

Funding provided by the province has not accounted for the inflationary costs our board has faced over the last few years and we have been faced with staff reductions and increased class sizes. This has intensified the diminishing mental health of our staff and ultimately the students we serve. In Budget 2023, our division was expecting a funding increase of 6% as portrayed to the media but in fact received no additional funding due to the elimination of the bridge funding. Budget 2024 had no changes in funding grant rates and we only received additional funding for the enrollment growth we experienced in the last two years because of the weighted moving average funding model.

Below are just a few examples of areas that we have experienced the most significant cost pressures but I am sure you are aware that cost pressures are affecting every service provider of a school division. These service providers have no choice but to pass those costs onto the division and we have no choice but to reduce resources to schools and ultimately students.

- Alberta School Employee Benefit Plan (ASEBP) benefit premiums have increased 33.65% over the last 4 years increasing division costs by \$1.6M and they are anticipated to continue to increase between 3 and 7 percent for the foreseeable future.
- All division employee salaries increased with the last round of collective bargaining and the province only funded the increases negotiated centrally for the teachers. This left our division having to fund all other employee increases with the operational funding already provided.
- Utility market rates are substantially higher than in previous years. Our most recent contract renewal for natural gas went from \$2.65/GJ to \$4.06/GJ. And the carbon taxes that we are paying on natural gas and fuel alone has been \$450K over the last few years.

In addition to these cost pressures, our board has been negatively impacted by the weighted moving average in a position of increased enrolments. We reduced reserves to the 3.2% as required for 2023/2024 and these reserves are required to fund the students we gain over and above projections. Although the supplemental growth grant is appreciated and helpful, it is a fraction of the actual base instruction rate for a student. Recently we experienced a year of 5% enrolment growth and were provided an in-year funding adjustment.

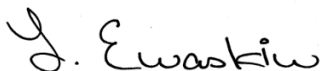
We are requesting the following two items to be addressed with regards to funding

- 1) Sufficient annual funding to address inflationary costs and an in year funding adjustment for actual enrolments.
- 2) In-year adjustment be implemented every year to fund for our actual enrolment each year.

Our board does not take the penning of a letter to the Minister lightly, but the impact on our classrooms has brought us to the place where we feel the need to act. We look forward to your response, and would be happy to meet with you in person to discuss this important matter. further.

We also give thanks and gratitude to our local MLA's, Honourable Nate Glubish, Honourable Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk, Mr. Kyle Kawawski, and Ms. Jackie Lovely for their unwavering and respectful support over the years and will continue to reciprocate that respect with meaningful, thoughtful and direct communications such as this letter.

Warmest Regards,



Le-Ann Ewaskiw
Board Chair
Elk Island Catholic Separate School Division

cc: Honourable Nate Glubish, MLA for Strathcona-Sherwood Park
Honourable Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk, MLA for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville
Mr. Kyle Kasawski, MLA for Sherwood Park
Ms. Jackie Lovely, MLA for Camrose
Rhonda Borowski, ATA Local 21 President

Zena Johnson, Unifor Local President

CUPE Local President

Rick Chaba, Transportation Association President

EICS School Council Chairs, Catholic Education Parent Advisory Committee (CEPAC)