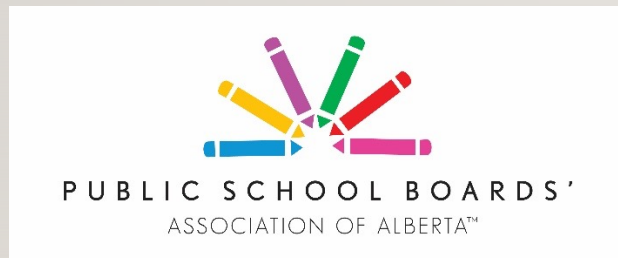


PRIVATE SCHOOLS FUNDING IN ALBERTA: SCALING-UP PRIVATIZATION

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RESEARCH AIM & PURPOSES

- Provide an up-to-date account of private school funding (provincial funding and student fee levels charged by privates) in Alberta.
- Examine private school developments in Alberta in the context of privatization processes and the implications for public education.

PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN ALBERTA: AN INTRODUCTION

- Private schools are not accountable to the public through elected trustees.
- Private schools can pick and choose students, whereas public schools are required to accept all students.
- Private schools can charge tuition fees at any level they deem appropriate.
- Private schools are not subject to the same conflict of interest as public schools with regard to restrictions on familial and business relationships.

PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN ALBERTA: AN INTRODUCTION

- The history of private schools in Alberta dates back to the early 1900s, and since 1967 the provincial government has provided them with financial support.
- In 2020, the Government of Alberta passed legislation to “protect the status of independent (private) schools” as integral providers of school “choice” (LaGrange, 2020).
- Currently, there are 160 private school authorities in the province that operate 197 private schools, serving nearly 38,000 students.

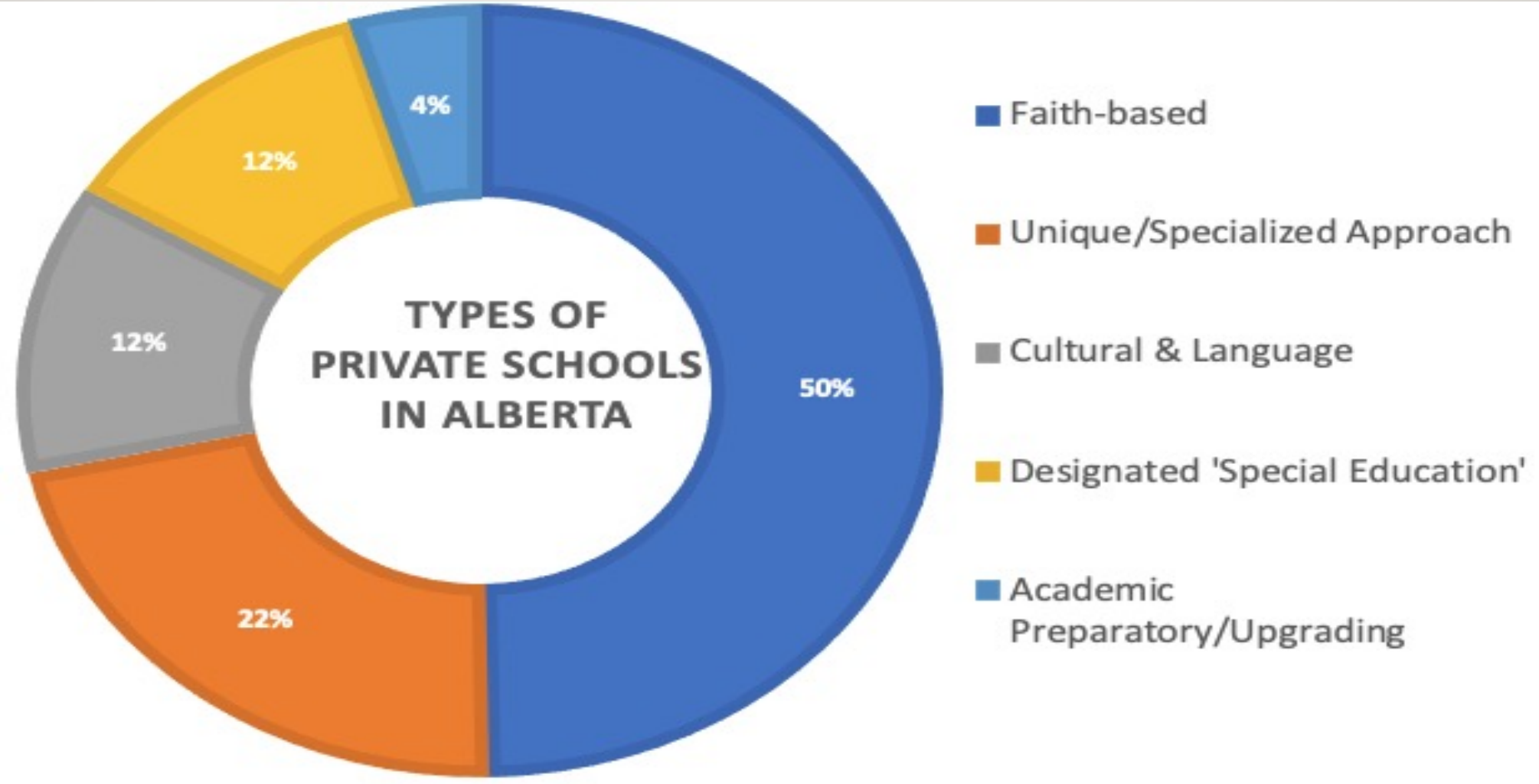
PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN ALBERTA - 2021/22

Type of Private School	Number of schools
Accredited Funded*	129 (65%)
Accredited Non-Funded	13 (7%)
Heritage Language	24 (12%)
Registered	24 (12%)
Total	197

~5.9% of Alberta student population

*Includes accredited funded designated special education private schools
Source: Alberta Education

TYPES OF PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN ALBERTA



UNDERSTANDING PRIVATIZATION IN ALBERTA

- 1. Provincial funding** – government financing to private schools has increased progressively over the years.
- 2. Liberalization** – no restrictions on the amount of fees that funded private schools can charge.
- 3. Marketization** – conditions whereby the private sector competes (i.e. school choice) with public providers.

SCALING-UP PRIVATIZATION:

PRIVATE SCHOOLS FUNDING TASK FORCE (1997/98)

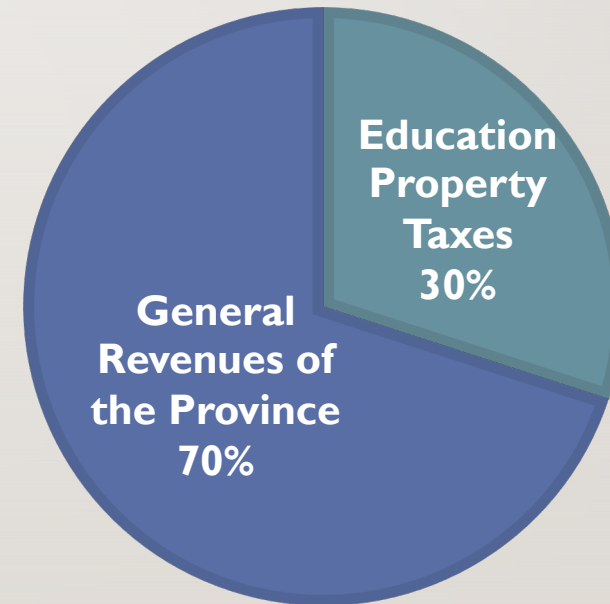
- Public opinion was “divided on whether or not private schools should receive public funding” (Private Schools Task Force, 1998, p. 18)
- Despite public opposition, the Task Force determined that provincial funding for private schools would be set as a proportion of all applicable instructional grants provided to public schools, which would increase to 60 percent.
- The *Private Schools Funding Task Force* revealed that “respondents strongly supported the idea of parents paying for choices outside the public education system.” But, the final recommendation and current policy was to set no limits on the tuition fees that funded private schools can charge.

SCALING-UP PRIVATIZATION:

CABINET POLICY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION TO INCREASE PRIVATE SCHOOL FUNDING (2007/08)

- In 2008, the provincial government increased the grant rate to funded private schools from 60 percent to 70 percent for all applicable grants; without any public consultation. Additionally, private schools became eligible for public grants for operations and maintenance in order to upgrade privately owned facilities.

Operating Budget to School Boards



PROVINCIAL FUNDING TO PRIVATE SCHOOLS: A NATIONAL COMPARISON

- 1) **Alberta** = eligible for 70% of the public rate for all applicable school grants.
- 2) **Québec** = eligible for 60% of what is paid to public schools, for educational services only.
- 3) **Saskatchewan** = eligible for 50% of per student average operating grants.
- 4) **Manitoba** = eligible for 50% of public school net operating expenditures.
- 5) **British Columbia** = eligible for 35% (Group 2 schools) or 50% (Group 1 schools) of per-student operating costs.
- 6) **Ontario, Newfoundland & Labrador, PEI, and Nova Scotia** = provide no financial support to private schools.

Alberta ranks first, nationally, for the highest level of funding to private schools, but ranks seventh in spending to public schools.

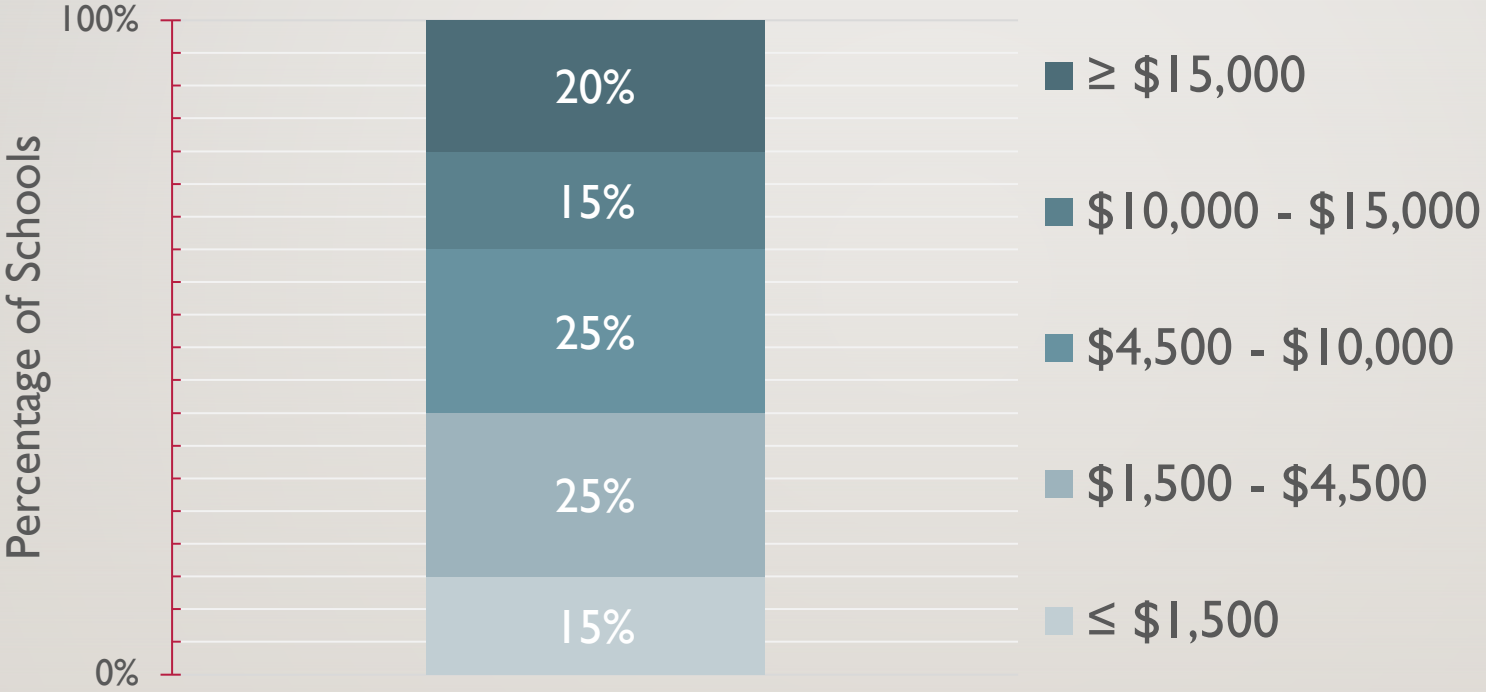
INTEGRATING PRIVATE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS AS “ALTERNATIVE” PUBLIC SCHOOLS

- Since 1993, more than thirty private Christian schools have signed agreements with different public school boards to operate as “alternative” public schools, which enables these schools to receive the full amount of provincial funding as do all other public schools.
- Is this an example of “hidden” privatization or the public takeover of private schools?

PRIVATE SCHOOL FEES

- Fee levels are set by individual school boards and vary significantly from zero to >\$30K
- Alberta Government does not regulate or limit the amount of tuition fees that can be charged by accredited private schools.
- Average fees charged by private schools in Alberta (per student, each year) are:
 - \$7,248 (Grades 1-6)
 - \$7,922 (Grades 7-9)
 - \$9,764 (Grades 10-12)

INSTRUCTIONAL FEES PER STUDENT CHARGED BY PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN ALBERTA



ALBERTA'S "ELITE" PRIVATE SCHOOLS

- 19 private schools in Alberta charge anywhere from \$12,000 per student, per year to more than \$35,000 per year for selective programs.
- More than \$43.2 million in provincial funding was directed to these schools last year.

ALBERTA'S "ELITE" PRIVATE SCHOOLS

WEST ISLAND COLLEGE

- Tuition = \$19,968 per student
- Family Membership Fee = \$3,500
- Capital Improvement Fee = \$3,500
- School Uniforms = \$800-\$1,000
- Busing = \$2,400

TOTAL = >\$30,000 (excluding fees for supplies and optional activities)

REVENUES

Tuition & Student Fees = \$11.2 million
(74% of revenues)

Alberta Education Grants = \$3.26 million
(22% of revenues)

Private School	Revenues		Year
	Alberta Education Grants	Tuition & Student Fees	
Calgary Waldorf School	\$1,221,632 (30%)	\$1,995,231 (49%)	2020/21 (actual)
Clear Water Academy	\$2,107,451 (26%)	\$5,432,898 (66%)	2020/21 (actual)
Calgary Jewish Academy	\$2,044,667 (40%)	\$2,246,011 (44%)	2020/21 (actual)
Strathcona-Tweedsmuir School	\$3,588,007 (16%)	\$16,223,523 (71%)	2020/21 (actual)
Calgary Academy*	\$7,265,198 (37%)	11,079,599 (56%)	2020/21 (actual)
Delta West Academy	\$448,156 (21%)	\$1,520,243 (70%)	2020/21 (actual)
Edge School	\$1,738,294 (15%)	\$5,542,733 (49%)	2020/21 (budget)
Lycée Louis Pasteur	\$1,969,253 (16%)	\$5,620,386 (46%)	2020/21 (budget)
North Point School for Boys	\$822,000 (40%)	\$1,048,050 (51%)	2020/21 (budget)
Renert School	\$2,630,000 (23%)	\$8,485,000 (73%)	2020/21 (budget)
Rundle College Society*	\$8,319,627 (25%)	\$21,617,171 (66%)	2021/22 (budget)
River Valley School	\$1,281,271 (18%)	\$4,109,173 (57%)	2020/21 (actual)
Tanbridge Academy	\$708,225 (28%)	\$1,668,665 (67%)	2021/22 (projected)
Weber Academy	\$5,026,000 (21%)	\$17,519,000 (74%)	2021/22 (projected)
West Island College	\$3,262,285 (22%)	\$11,113,822 (74%)	2020/21 (actual)

ALBERTA'S "ELITE" PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN CALGARY: REINFORCING SOCIOECONOMIC DISPARITY?

- All of Alberta's elite private schools are located in Calgary, where the median household income in 2019 was \$105,060.
- At rates upwards of \$30,000, the average-earning family in Calgary cannot afford to spend almost 30 percent of their income on private school fees.
- Calgary is the most unequal city in Canada in terms of income disparity. Hence, the high level of income disparity in Calgary parallels the high density of "elite" private schools in the city, and this correlation should not be viewed as mere coincidence but as mutually-reinforcing.

INVESTING IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS, RATHER THAN “ELITE” PRIVATE SCHOOLS

- \$43.2 million could afford the hiring of nearly 600 additional teachers or the construction of two new Elementary schools (serving approximately 650 students each).
- Investing in public schools, rather than “elite” private schools could help to lower student-teacher ratios and/or rebuild public schools overloaded with facility concerns.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Possible policy solution:** Reduce provincial funding to private schools that charge tuition above a certain level.
- **Recommendation of this report:** *Public financial support for private schools (excluding ECS operators and DSEPS) be phased out over a period of time.*

THANK YOU!

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