



Media Release

Public School Boards' Association of Alberta – Alberta Government Announcement: Driving Innovation Through Education

April 20, 2023 (Edmonton, AB) – The Public School Boards' Association of Alberta (PSBAA) believes that Public School education is the foundation of a strong Alberta.

The Alberta Government's announcement to purchase the SMART Technologies building at the University of Calgary Research Park in establishing a Charter School Hub clearly shows their favouritism towards Charter Schools. One might wonder how our government can justify utilizing taxpayer dollars earmarked for K-12 education for facilities that are more extravagant than those found at some Private Schools.

In the past day, I have received calls from PSBAA members, colleagues, and people across the province expressing their concern that the Government has taken a significant step that clearly jeopardizes the position of the Public School System in Alberta.

While PSBAA is not generally opposed to Charter Schools, this decision and the use of these facilities for a select few students is concerning – it smacks of elitism. Charter Schools represent only 1.4% of the Alberta Student population versus the 68.4% attending Public Schools. The facilities announced today for the Charter School Hub would better service the Calgary Board of Education's Student population, addressing core needs.

Alberta Public School student education should not be sacrificed for the benefit of a select few. The diverting of funds away from the majority of Albertans who are attending Public Schools and do not have access or funding for this type of facility should be revisited by the Alberta Government.

We encourage the government to conduct a thorough evaluation of:

1. spending on K-12 education across the ecosystem, understanding where and why the system experiences a continual shortfall.
2. public school education funding in light of key economic and societal impacts including but not limited to: immigration, inflation, learning loss, and mental health.
3. all legislation and regulation impacting the public school system and the larger K-12 education ecosystem – seeking transparency, equity and improved efficiencies.

Public Schools offer choice through academic programming, athletics and extra-curricular opportunities. We offer alternative and enhanced learning programs and provide equitable access to education in all regions of Alberta – for ALL Alberta students

Public Schools are where professionals (doctors, nurses, engineers, lawyers, IT developers, etc.) develop their foundation for learning. Public Schools are also where skilled trade workers get their start. Essentially, Public Schools provide a foundation for any and every career path chosen by Albertans. In reality, Public Schools provide a foundation for a diversified workforce, driving a diversified economy.

Albertans expect accountability for the responsible use of public funds and for the future of our children. Albertans expect School Boards to make sound decisions, providing appropriate leadership and oversight in order to achieve the best student outcomes and best return for publicly funded education.

That said, Public School Boards are ultimately accountable to the citizens of Alberta as Trustees are publicly elected. Such is not the case for Charter and Private Schools. While they receive public funds for every student, they are not accountable to those providing the funds – the taxpayer. In fact, Charter and Private Schools are not required to have a democratically elected board nor are they required to employ certified teachers or even teach the provincially approved curriculum (although some do.)

Rather than making decisions that systematically undermine and degrade the Public School System, we encourage the Premier, the Minister and the Alberta government to invest in the education of ALL Alberta students and the future of our province.

– Dennis MacNeil, President

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