



## Smarter Funding, Stronger Schools: Alberta's Education Future

As Alberta students return to classrooms this school year, parents and communities celebrate the excitement of learning. At the same time, schools face mounting pressures. Enrolment is rising rapidly, classroom complexity is increasing, student mental health needs are growing, and costs—from staff salaries and transportation to infrastructure maintenance—continue to climb. Across the province, these realities put stress on an education system whose funding has not kept pace.

Alberta's K-12 education budget, while significant, is increasingly **inadequate** for several reasons. First, population growth and immigration have expanded student numbers faster than funding increases, resulting in larger class sizes and stretched resources. Second, inflation and rising costs for staff, programs and facilities erode the value of existing funding. Third, the diversity of student needs—from English language learners to students with disabilities, Indigenous students and high achievers—requires targeted support that the current system cannot fully accommodate. Fourth, aging schools and infrastructure require maintenance and modernization that often compete with operational priorities. Collectively, these factors mean school boards must make difficult trade-offs, even as they strive to provide high-quality education for all students.

In Alberta, **school boards do not set funding levels**. Their role is governance and oversight within the framework determined by the province. Boards approve budgets, shape policy, provide accountability, and advocate for students and communities. They oversee how schools are run and how resources are deployed, but funding levels, allocation formulas and many program priorities are set provincially. Boards work diligently to stretch every dollar and make strategic decisions, but without sufficient and flexible funding, their ability to respond to local priorities is constrained.

This is why we need to **be smarter about education funding**. Smart funding is not simply more money—it's a strategic approach that focuses on **identifying problems, understanding their root causes and targeting solutions where they will have the greatest impact**. Rather than applying temporary fixes, boards and the province must collaborate to address underlying challenges, ensuring adequate staffing for growing classes, providing mental health supports, investing in modern infrastructure and giving students with diverse needs the tools they require to succeed.

Smart funding is **needs-responsive**. It recognizes each school community is unique and resources must follow the specific needs of students, whether that means smaller class sizes in high-growth areas, targeted supports for vulnerable learners or specialized programs to challenge academically inclined students. When funding is applied strategically, boards can make decisions that solve problems rather than merely managing symptoms.

Alberta's future depends on strong public schools. Every student deserves the opportunity to thrive, and every community benefits when schools are equipped to meet local challenges. By committing to smarter, flexible and strategic funding, the province ensures boards can act effectively, resources are used where they matter most and students have the supports they need to succeed.

It's time for Alberta to invest in its future not just with dollars, but with **intelligence, strategy and responsiveness**.

The Public School Boards' Association of Alberta and our member boards bring insight and experience from the front lines of K-12 education. We see the challenges first-hand, and we know the opportunities that come when schools are properly supported. By working in true collaboration with the province, communities and families, we can move beyond temporary fixes and build lasting solutions. Strong schools build a strong province—and that begins with smarter funding for every student.

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*The **Public School Boards' Association of Alberta** represents 28 public school boards that account for more than 800 schools and more than 250,000 students across the province. We believe public schools are the first choice of our communities, where all our children learn and live the values of democracy together, reflecting our hope and shaping the future of our communities.*