

The Honourable Demetrios Nicolaidis

Minister of Education
228 Legislature Building
Edmonton, AB
T5K 2B6

December 18, 2024

Re: Funding for Full-time Kindergarten Programming

Dear Minister Nicolaidis:

On behalf of the Board of Trustees of Grande Yellowhead Public School Division, I am advocating the province fund full-time kindergarten programming for Alberta's children.

The first six years of a child's life are critical to their development and learning success. Full-day kindergarten gives children a start in school and life by creating a solid foundation for learning that promotes all areas of a child's development in reading, writing, and math skills. It also makes the transition to Grade 1 easier for both the family and the child. Children's early experiences at school are especially important for social and emotional development and confidence. These experiences have the potential to improve children's overall health and well-being for a lifetime. In small, rural communities, the school is often the only organization available to provide these opportunities.

As you know, kindergarten programs received 0.5, part time funding from your ministry, despite extensive research on the importance of early learning for brain development in the first five years of a child's life. In addition to not funding full time kindergarten, as is the standard in most Canada's provinces, nationally, the province of Alberta spends the least on public education and recently increased the amount of public funds it allocates to private schools – thus pulling funds from public schools, and compounding inequities that exist in already marginalized populations.

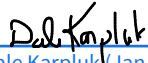
Specifically, within small, rural communities, there is not the range of organizations that offer part-time kindergarten with busing to daycare, or full-time learning/development specific options for working parents that exist within larger urban or metro communities, i.e., early learning focused childcare centres that offer art, music, second languages, dance/sport, technology, and/or experiential learning opportunities, as an example.

In 2007, the Board of Trustees directed additional funds to expand kindergarten programming hours in Division schools; since 2017, the Board of Trustees has directed funds to extend the program hours again from four full days to five full days in both Edson and Hinton to address increased demand for childcare. And, as of this fall, the Board directed funds to ensure full-time kindergarten programming is available in all our communities. However, directing funds to this priority, impacts funding for other priority areas.

Kindergarten programs are essential to children's learning. In rural Alberta, kindergarten programming is often the only local organization structured to enhance child development, establish necessary social/emotional skills for peer relationships, and establish community; further, it is essential to our families' ability to work.

GYPSPD is one of many similar small, rural boards that share the need for full-time kindergarten funding. We request that your ministry fund full-time kindergarten for Alberta's children.

Sincerely,


[Dale Karpluk \(Jan 8, 2025 17:12 MST\)](#)

Dale Karpluk, Board Chair (Jasper)

Cc: Board of Trustees for Grande Yellowhead Public School Division
Mr. Martin Long, MLA for West Yellowhead
Mr. Shane Getson, MLA for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland
Dr. Dennis Parsons, Superintendent of Schools
Rural Caucus of Alberta School Boards
Alberta School Boards Association
Public School Boards' Association of Alberta

