

**The Honourable Demetrios Nicolaidis**

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

January 31, 2025

**Re: Public Funds for Public Schools**

Dear Minister Nicolaidis:

On behalf of the Board of Trustees of Grande Yellowhead Public School Division, I am reaching out to add our voice to the collective advocacy efforts of public school boards in Alberta. As we prepare to receive your ministry's budget for next year, we urge you to consider the essential role that public school boards serve – not only to Alberta's students – but to Alberta's communities and society: a responsibility we proudly hold.

As your ministry knows, public schools ensure students enter society with an excellent foundation for their next steps and value for those characteristics we want to see within our society – inclusion, kindness, empathy, and compassion. In GYPSD, we believe in the impact of education in the early years of child development. We fund full-time, full-day kindergarten programming because we know what this means for the long-term success of kids. We also attend to the unique wants and needs in our communities by providing Forest School, Outdoor Classrooms, the Elite Trades Program, and career-focused options that promote STEM learning.

Alberta's K-12 Public Education has been noted internationally as the gold standard for decades. Yet more funds are being pulled from public education to support private/independent schools and Charter School expansion. As the funding pie is sliced thinner and thinner, the real issues and challenges being experienced in Alberta's public schools are being exacerbated.

The number of children requiring intensive early interventions, accessed through PUF programming, is growing. More Alberta students are requiring specialized supports, ranging from short-term, to permanent learning challenges, mental health, and extreme behavioural challenges, well beyond the capacity of educators to address. More young adults are returning for a 4th or 5th year of high school programming to attain their high school diploma and/or courses and credentialing opportunities to support their transition into post-secondary or career and industry training. These children and youth are our most vulnerable populations requiring more resources and support than the current funding model and philosophy provide.

Increasing Program Unit Funding for 3-5 year olds, funding full-time kindergarten, addressing complexity issues in classrooms with clear policy and funding, installing a framework and policy for school nutrition, properly funding dual credit and career pathway programming, and removing the silos that exist between the ministries that serve our children and their families are areas in urgent need of support if we want to close the poverty gap and mitigate the challenges our children face.

Minister Nicolaidis, the health and strength of our society depends on the health and strength of our public school system. A continued philosophy and approach to undervalue and pull back on adequate funds for public school education serves the narrative of a small minority of families

who point to class size and lack of access to specialized services, resources, or unique program options to justify the need for 'choice'. All available funds should be utilized to strengthen choice within the public system and not spend badly needed dollars on supporting/expanding charter and private schools. Public schools serve all of Alberta's children; they need to be prioritized and funded accordingly.

We respectfully request public funds for k-12 education in Alberta only be used to operate Alberta's public schools. We ask for an immediate freeze on new Charter School approvals and that current Charter School policies for accepting students and capping enrollments be changed.

Finally, we urge that the province discontinue the allocation of any public funds to private/independent schools, and that these funds, with adequate increases, be returned to the public system to address much needed support for Alberta's public school system.

Sincerely,



[Dale Karpluk](#) (Feb 4, 2025 14:47 MST)

Dale Karpluk, Board Chair (Jasper)

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

