

HIGH PRAIRIE SCHOOL DIVISION BOARD ADVOCACY POINTS



Mission

Through exemplary teaching, leadership, and collaborative partnerships, we prepare students to be socially responsible and to succeed locally and globally.

Vision

We inspire, lead, and achieve to the highest level.

Revised: April 9, 2024 1:18 PM

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PROVIDING TIMELY AND APPROPRIATE MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

Objective - HPSD students can access the necessary mental health services in our communities in a timely manner. Currently, local services are not always accessible to our students due to lack of personnel or programming of services in our region.

High Prairie School Division will advocate to facilitate mental health supports for students in collaboration with parents, families and service providers.

Background - Currently, HPSD is providing mental health supports for all students except those requiring psychiatric services. This includes the supports available through divisional staff, including psychologists, counseling consultants, and wellness coaches. The Division attempts to help and advocates for parents and guardians seeking additional supports, like psychiatric services, which are not currently available to HPSD students or families. These services are not always available in our region, and families must travel significant distance in order to access these services. Additionally, there is added time and expense for families to obtain psychiatric services. To complicate matters further, if a service is available, often it is not available in a timely manner.

HPSD completed a Mental Health Services Proposal, which was received and not approved by the Minister of Education and the Minister of Health and the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. The Board written proposal advocated for a streamlined approach for students to access psychiatric services. This proposal was asking for a change in process, not for additional funding.

The Board met with municipal counterparts, Members of the Legislative Assembly, and various Ministers to discuss and seek support. Letters of support from municipal counterparts, and the Division submitted the proposal a second time. The Board is still awaiting a response and/or feedback from the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions regarding this mental health proposal.

Mental Health Resources need to be available in our communities. The last available data (2022) shows a continued decrease in self-perceived mental health and a lower self-perceived mental health as compared to the rest of the province as referenced in our Community Health Profile published by Alberta Health Services: <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/9f7a14b7-3c74-4dd7-90ea-2d2daa088735/resource/e656f846-928d-4947-bba0-dea6a03e629d/download/hlth-phc-high-prairie-2022.pdf> (see right for QR code).



Access to mental health support in our rural communities needs to be available within the schools and the greater community in order to provide wrap-around services to these families in need.

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PRESERVING LOCAL GOVERNANCE

Objective - To protect and respect the autonomy of democratically elected trustees so they can carry out their legally defined role while addressing their region's unique local and societal context.

Background - The Alberta government is eliminating the ability for locally elected officials to effectively manage their portfolio as defined in Section 33 of the *Education Act*:

Board responsibilities as per the Education Act:

33(1) A board, as a partner in education, has the responsibility to

- (h) establish and maintain governance and organizational structures that promote student well-being and success, and monitor and evaluate their effectiveness,*
- (i) ensure effective stewardship of the board's resources,*
- (j) recruit the superintendent and entrust the day-to-day management of the school division to the staff through the superintendent,*

Despite this legislated mandate in the Education Act, local school boards are limited in their scope as they have been removed from central bargaining points such as salary and compensation.

By setting these provincial parameters, the operations of locally elected trustees, and their superintendent who is entrusted with the day-to-day management of the school division, are rendered ineffective because of the provincially set mandate of TEBA and PBCO. The Board of Trustees cannot effectively fulfill the mandates of the Education Act due to these limitations.

The Alberta government is solely imposing this restrictive public-sector bargaining through their PBCO on school authorities. No other level of locally elected government is being stripped of their autonomy. According to the Alberta government website, "Alberta's public sector has more than 230,000 unionized employees working in the core public services of healthcare, K-12 public education, post-secondary institutions and the public service. The public service includes correctional officers, meat inspectors, social workers, consumer protection jobs and many others".

Questions:

- 1. What problem is this restrictive action solving?** This action will hurt rural school boards in their recruitment process. There are significant differences between communities within the province. Our rural reality is not the same as school boards in Edmonton or Calgary.
- 2. Allow Elected Officials to Perform Their Legal Obligations.** By removing the ability for locally elected officials to recruit and compensate their employees, it restricts their ability to achieve the mandates of the Education Act and rural Alberta has suffered extensively

due to the harm caused by this action.

We have understaffed hospitals and limited local services. Consequently, mental health concerns go untreated and our children and their families are suffering. In our experience with TEBA, we have realized similar concerns. By interfering with a school authority's ability to manage our resources and recruit staff effectively, your actions will create significant constraints on our ability to maintain adequate staffing levels.

While the Board of Trustees recognizes the mandate of TEBA is 'level the playing field' in regards to compensation, an unintended consequence of this mandate is that it is now more difficult than ever for rural school boards to attract and retain qualified personnel.

Our Division has already realized significant hiring shortfalls, including our school bus drivers. Negotiating in good faith, our Board and our School Bus Driver union, CUPE, reached an agreement for their current bus driver contract. The negotiated contract was agreeable to both administration and the union, and both parties were satisfied with the final provisions.

The contract was refused by the Alberta government as it showed a small increase in remuneration of under \$14,000 per year. Negotiations were required to restart to eliminate any pay increases.

Six months later, teachers received a pay increase, completely against all former government restrictions, resulting in significant animosity between our unionized school bus drivers and the Division and province.

The High Prairie School Division Board of Trustees urges the Provincial Government to reconsider the following:

- a. Update or remove the Superintendent regulations regarding compensation - it is difficult to recruit top talent when local and variable contexts cannot be reflected in total compensation.
- b. HPSD Board of Trustees strongly recommends that the Ministry of Education re-examines use of capital and operational reserve guidelines to ensure that existing caps allow enough flexibility for boards to maneuver unforeseen circumstances and allow for program development in key mandate areas such as literacy, numeracy and mental health.
- c. PBCO will be examining the total compensation of non-unionized employees within school divisions. High Prairie School Division's Board of Trustees have concerns regarding the potential of standardizing wages for non-unionized employees and the potential impact on budgets and the attraction and retention of staff in our Division.

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SUPPORTING RURAL ALBERTA

Objective - To ensure that rural Alberta educational services are adequately supported so that equitable services are provided for ALL Alberta students.

Background - The current needs to fully understand that the current government was elected through the overwhelming support from Rural Albertans. Our voice was loud and clear in the last provincial election and we expect that show of support to be reciprocated both in urban and rural areas. Please see appendix I and II for a further breakdown of electoral results.

Points to Consider:

How is this government improving the following:

1. Access to supports and services: mental health services are at the top of HPSD's Board of Trustees priorities. This commitment to mental health is prioritized on our strategic plan and is a key priority in measuring whether or not the school division is making gains in addressing mental health issues.
2. Incentives for living in rural Alberta - Attraction and retention of qualified staff is problematic outside urban Alberta areas. The ability to incentivize current and potential employees would help close this disparity between rural and urban areas in the province.
3. Inflationary and sky-rocketing utility prices - Rural Albertans pay high rates for utilities and inflation is having long-lasting effects on budgets. How can the province help school boards mitigate these financial pressures? HPSD Board of Trustees would like to encourage the provincial government to advocate that schools and not-for-profit organizations be exempted from the Carbon Pricing (Tax).

IMPROVING MEANINGFUL CROSS-MINISTRY/ LOCAL GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

Objective - To improve relations and efficiencies between school authorities and government departments and local governments. HPSD is excited to see red-tape reduction and cross-ministry collaboration in order to provide service to students in the most efficient and seamless way possible.

Background - While there has been evidence of work and conversations about cross-ministry supports and collaborations, our experience has been that this is sporadic and not consistent across regions/ministries.

Points to Consider:

1. How are you supporting cross-ministry/local government relations? There are affirmations from various government officials that our current government is prompting cross-ministry collaboration. How is this being operationalized by the government? As a school division, we have seen no real evidence of inter-ministry or inter-governmental collaboration and are uncertain as to how this has positively impacted our school operations.
2. What should this cross ministry collaboration look like for school divisions? How do we help make this collaboration better and stronger?
3. Where do we send people who require urgent mental health care? This includes for suicide prevention, formalized suicide risk prevention, and treatment for issues requiring intensive mental health supports including pediatric psychiatric services?

ADDITIONAL POINTS TO CONSIDER

As highlighted in the July 25, 2023 Mandate Letter from the Premier's Office to Honourable Demetrios Micolaidis, Minister of Education, Premier Smith laid out clear expectations to the Ministry and HPSD Board of Trustees would like to advocate the following points as outlined in that letter:

1. **Choice in Education** - is limiting the educational opportunities for rural students; we have a finite number of students being divided among an ever-increasing number of schools of choice which results in no one being able to provide anything beyond basic programming.
2. **Saving Seats for Rural Students** - is crucial for equity of opportunity for rural students. The lower numbers of students and funding cap for secondary schools realizes a limited number of course offerings. This results in rural students being wait-listed or rejected from post-secondary programs of study even though their academic successes are comparable to their urban counterparts.

Additionally the following Advocacy Points are of keen interest to the Board of Trustees:

3. **Continued Focus on Transportation Safety** - Through a reduction in the number of school bus fly-bys, Students are Safely Transported to and from school - To provide safe, reliable transportation services for students through a reduction in the number of fly-bys experienced by HPSD buses.
4. **Weighted Moving Average** - Work with provincial education advocacy groups to advocate for equity regarding the WMA with respect to the 2020-21 school year and the enrollment concerns as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
5. **Student Loan Breaks** - Student loan relief for those in post-secondary and trades schools who return to work in northern Alberta where a tax credit can be applied to those moving back to rural areas.
6. **Nutrition Project and Funding** - funding needs to continue as it greatly supports our students' overall health.
7. **IMR Funding** - There needs to be utilization funding for non-educational buildings.

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APPENDIX 1

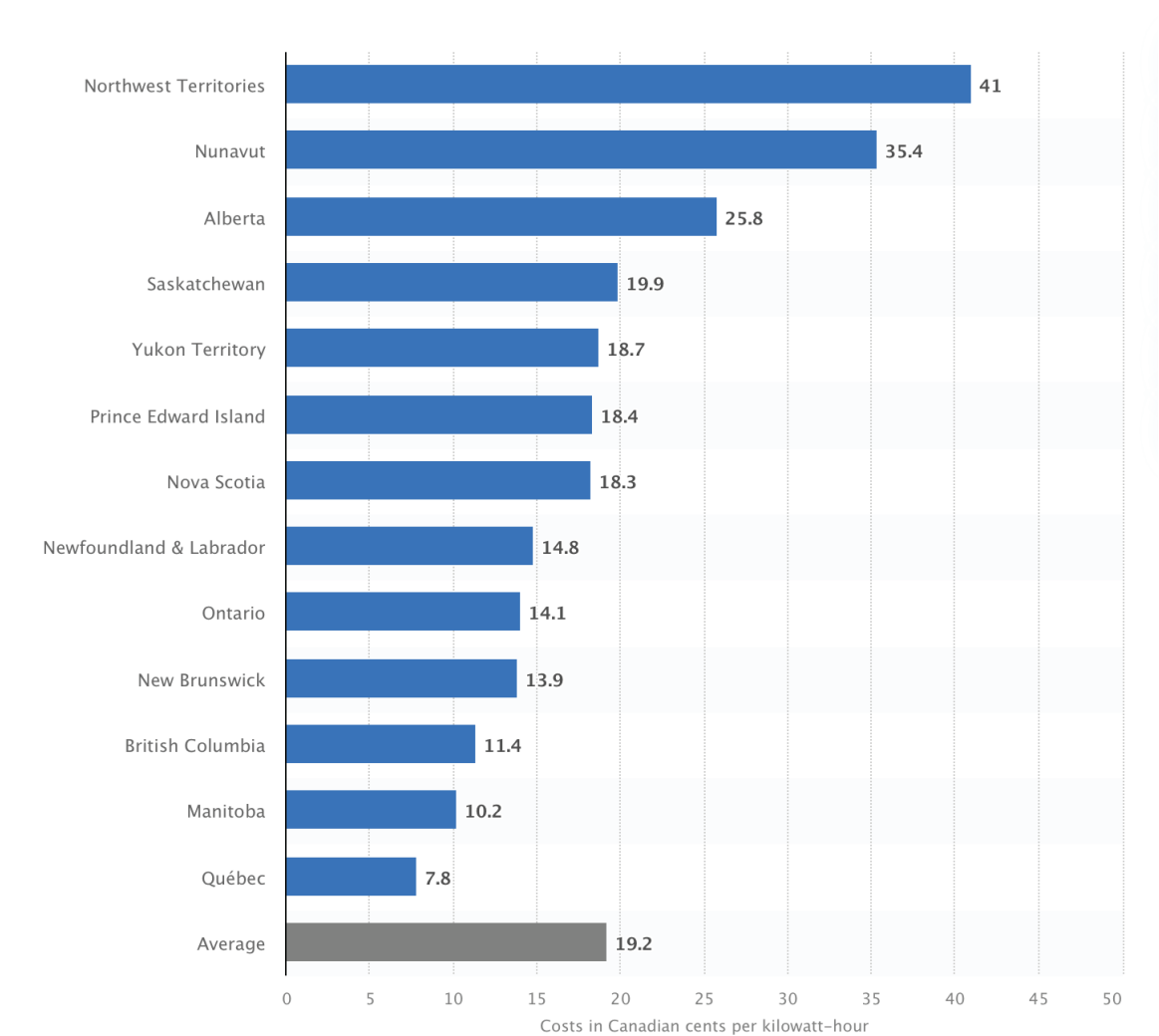
HPSD BOARD ADVOCACY POINTS

2023 Election Results by Riding

	NDP	UCP		NDP	UCP
CALGARY-ACADIA	10,959	10,937	AIRDRIE-COCHRANE	11,223	18,074
CALGARY-BEDDINGTON	10,269	9,726	AIRDRIE-EAST	8,697	15,215
CALGARY-BOW	12,552	13,175	ATHABASCA-BARRHEAD-WESTLOCK	5,401	15,631
CALGARY-BUFFALO	13,221	7,292	BANFF-KANANASKIS	11,562	11,259
CALGARY-CROSS	7,019	7,533	BONNYVILLE-COLD LAKE-ST. PAUL	4,327	13,315
CALGARY-CURRIE	12,261	9,181	BROOKS-MEDICINE HAT	5,477	13,315
CALGARY-EAST	6,425	7,123	CAMROSE	5,579	13,032
CALGARY-EDGEMONT	11,681	11,397	CARDSTON-SIKSIKA	2,527	10,550
CALGARY-ELBOW	12,189	11,446	CENTRAL PEACE-NOTLEY	2,216	9,280
CALGARY-FALCONRIDGE	7,786	5,476	CHESTERMERE-STRATHMORE	6,119	15,362
CALGARY-FISH CREEK	11,254	13,743	CYPRESS-MEDICINE HAT	7,697	13,489
CALGARY-FOOTHILLS	11,054	10,793	DRAYTON VALLEY-DEVON	5,009	16,532
CALGARY-GLENMORE	12,687	12,639	DRUMHELLER-STETTLER	2,684	15,270
CALGARY-HAYS	8,987	11,807	FORT MCMURRAY-LAC LA BICHE	2,561	7,692
CALGARY-KLEIN	10,564	9,697	FORT MCMURRAY-WOOD BUFFALO	1,884	6,483
CALGARY-LOUGHEED	6,924	9,690	FORT SASKATCHEWAN-VEGREVILLE	9,064	14,126
CALGARY-BHULLAR-MCCALL	7,265	5,261	GRANDE PRAIRIE	4,890	10,001
CALGARY-MOUNTAIN VIEW	16,516	8,468	GRANDE PRAIRIE-WAPITI	4,063	15,093
CALGARY-NORTH	7,798	7,927	HIGHWOOD	7,540	17,990
CALGARY-NORTH EAST	11,117	9,078	INNISFAIL-SYLVAN LAKE	5,700	16,385
CALGARY-NORTH WEST	11,778	11,921	LAC STE. ANNE-PARKLAND	5,868	14,923
CALGARY-PEIGAN	9,095	11,892	LACOMBE-PONOKA	4,995	14,324
CALGARY-SHAW	10,591	13,970	LEDUC-BEAUMONT	10,069	14,118
CALGARY-SOUTH EAST	9,442	14,087	LESSER SLAVE LAKE	2,636	5,171
CALGARY-VARSITY	13,449	9,377	LETHBRIDGE-EAST	10,362	10,998
CALGARY-WEST	9,468	12,793	LETHBRIDGE-WEST	12,082	9,525
EDMONTON-BEVERLY-CLAREVIEW	8,510	5,690	LIVINGSTONE-MACLEOD	6,492	16,491
EDMONTON-CASTLE DOWNS	10,044	7,286	MASKWACIS-WETASKIWIN	4,801	11,640
EDMONTON-CITY CENTRE	12,431	3,691	MORINVILLE-ST. ALBERT	11,728	13,472
EDMONTON-DECORE	8,109	6,326	OLDS-DIDSBURY-THREE HILLS	4,553	18,228
EDMONTON-ELLERSLIE	11,429	6,817	PEACE RIVER	2,587	8,236
EDMONTON-GLENORA	12,443	5,056	RED DEER-NORTH	7,144	10,629
EDMONTON-GOLD BAR	15,508	6,174	RED DEER-SOUTH	9,976	13,469
EDMONTON-HIGHLANDS-NORWOOD	9,491	3,350	RIMBEY-ROCKY MOUNTAIN HOUSE-SUNDRE	3,118	15,571
EDMONTON-MANNING	10,547	6,769	SHERWOOD PARK	13,108	11,447
EDMONTON-MCCLUNG	9,603	6,029	SPRUCE GROVE-STONY PLAIN	10,197	14,365
EDMONTON-MEADOWS	11,013	6,378	ST. ALBERT	15,021	10,200
EDMONTON-MILL WOODS	11,063	6,869	STRATHCONA-SHERWOOD PARK	11,646	13,865
EDMONTON-NORTH WEST	9,978	6,388	TABER-WARNER	2,817	12,379
EDMONTON-RIVERVIEW	12,875	5,564	VERMILION-LLOYDMINSTER-WAINWRIGHT	3,075	13,097
EDMONTON-RUTHERFORD	13,012	6,366	WEST YELLOWHEAD	5,679	14,456
EDMONTON-SOUTH	14,171	9,492			
EDMONTON-SOUTH WEST	14,380	10,741			
EDMONTON-STRATHCONA	13,980	3,032		UCP	TOTAL
EDMONTON-WEST HENDAY	11,495	7,956	RURAL	37	41
EDMONTON-WHITEMUD	12,797	7,799	METRO	34	46

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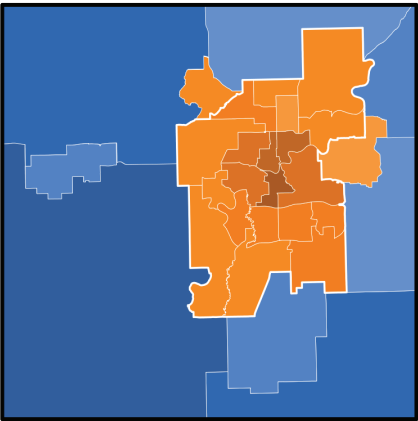
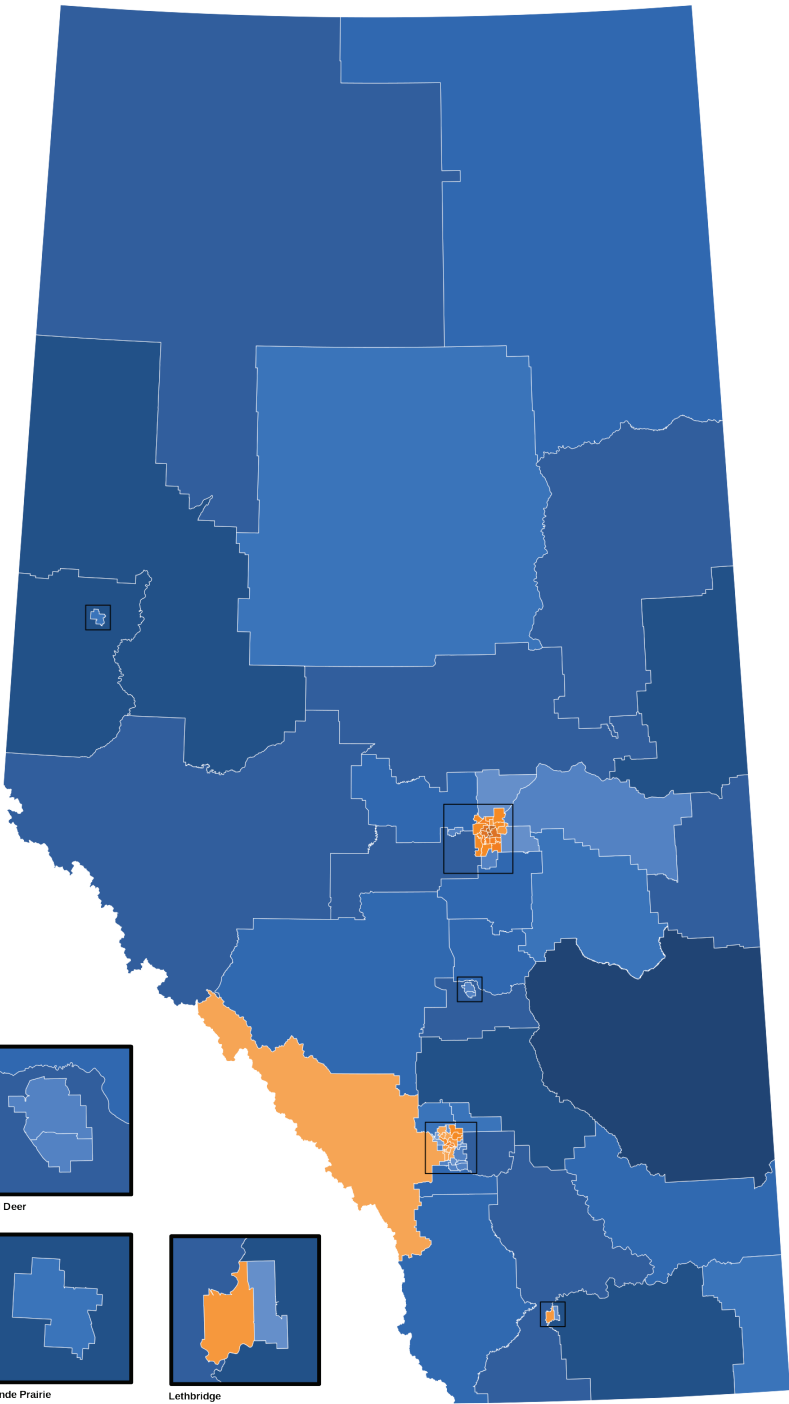
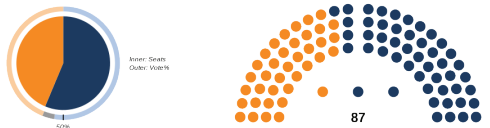
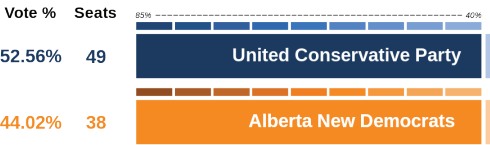
Costs in Canadian cents per kilowatt-hour



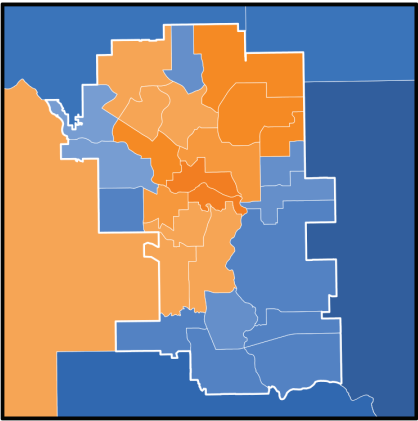
2023 Alberta General Election

87 Seats to Legislative Assembly | 44 for Majority

Party Results



Edmonton



Calgary



Premier of Alberta

Office of the Premier, 307 Legislature Building, Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2B6 Canada

July 25, 2023

The Honourable Demetrios Nicolaides
Minister of Education

Dear Minister:

I want to thank you for your service to this government and congratulate you on your new role as Minister of Education.

Our Cabinet is made up of talented, diverse, and experienced leaders and I am proud to share with you our responsibility to fulfill the mandate given to us by Albertans. We all love this beautiful province and want the best for our families and our future. Over the next four years, we will take clear and decisive action to grow and diversify our economy while ensuring our health, education and other core social programs are world class.

I have full confidence that our team will build on our solid foundation of stability, informed decision-making, and good governance to improve the lives of Albertans and help our province realize its potential.

Ensuring our children receive a world-class education is a top priority and focus of our government. Alberta's economy is creating tens of thousands of jobs in the modern economy, yet we are not doing enough to encourage Alberta students to pursue career paths with the most plentiful and lucrative employment opportunities. This is both hurting students and exacerbating our provincial labour shortage. We must do a better job of equipping Alberta's youth with the skills and direction they need to find meaningful employment in the economy we are building.

Part of achieving this objective is to promote greater choice in education. Expanding parent and student options in our public, separate, francophone, charter, independent (private), early childhood and home education systems will ensure parents have a host of tailored options for their children's education that best suit the needs of their individual students.

And importantly, as we grow new opportunities for students, we must address the growing needs of students with mental health and other learning challenges. These children must be provided with every opportunity to flourish in our education system and economy. We need them to be successful, fulfilled and fully participative in building our province.

Under your leadership as Minister of Education, I expect you to work closely with your Cabinet and Caucus colleagues and the public service through the committee, Cabinet, and legislative processes to deliver on our platform commitments to support Albertans, including:

- Working in cooperation with the Minister of Advanced Education, fund growth of "CAREERS" with public and separate school divisions to increase student participation in off-campus programs or paid internships.

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- Enhancing dual credit grant programs to make more funding available for new dual credit programming and equipment.
- Continuing to bring more collegiate schools online across the province to create pathways for students to post-secondary or their chosen fields in the workforce.
- In collaboration with the Minister of Advanced Education, reviewing the *Skills for Jobs Task Force Report*, and advancing key recommendations from the report pertaining to your ministry, including the design and implementation of an apprenticeship system (similar to the Germanic model) for high school age students interested in pursuing vocational education and training in the skilled trades.
- Investing \$20 million over 4 years in promoting career pathways including:
 - Organizing career fairs for high school students in high demand sectors.
 - Establishing an online career counselling website for students and parents to assist with career and education road mapping.
 - Launching a high school targeted advertising campaign to promote high demand careers.
 - Developing more teacher training for career and technology studies.
 - Collaborating with the Minister of Advanced Education to develop and promote career educational scholarships in areas of labour shortage for Alberta's K-12 students.
 - Funding additional mobile CTS and CTF labs

In addition, I expect you to deliver on further initiatives overseen by your ministry including:

- As lead, working with the Minister of Seniors, Community, and Social Services to invest \$5 million to improve testing and educational supports for children with complex needs including children with autism.
- Collaborating with the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction, who is the lead, to expand access to young people struggling with severe mental illness to construct four new youth mental wellness centres to provide inpatient mental health and addiction treatment to youth while expanding prevention and early intervention mental health support for children and youth that are integrated within schools and communities.
- Reviewing the role of parent school councils and working with educators to explore ways parents can appropriately provide more input into school policies and learning options.
- Ensuring Alberta's educational funding model continues to promote parental choice in education. This includes ensuring that Alberta's public, separate, francophone, charter,

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independent (private) schools and early childhood services operators and home education systems are all appropriately funded to ensure the highest educational outcomes for students.

- Working to significantly increase the number of schools in the communities of greatest need.
- Making recommendations on the best way to create an expedited teaching certificate to fast-track instructors of skilled trades and other professions into teaching positions in junior high and high schools.
- Exploring incentives to support the recruitment and retention of teachers, educational assistants and support staff in underserved areas of the province.
- Continuing to implement additional educational assistants in our classrooms to address learning loss and the increasing complexity of learning needs.
- Evaluating and, if needed, expanding supports for qualified professionals, such as speech language pathologists, physical therapists, occupational therapists, and psychologists.
- Reviewing and strengthening Program Unit Funding (PUF) to ensure programming and funding are addressing the educational needs of children with severe disabilities or delay.
- Working collaboratively with parents, teachers, and stakeholders to continue to implement K to12 curriculum, and implement additional basic life and home maintenance skills as well as financial literacy training into the high school curriculum where appropriate.
- Assisting each ministry to execute on their mandate to design a ministry-specific job-attraction strategy that raises awareness for young Albertans, especially those in grades 9-12, and adults changing careers of the skilled trades and professions available in each economic sector including pathways for education, apprenticeship, and training.

I direct you to work closely with the public service, including your Deputy Minister and other senior officials in your ministry, to support the priorities outlined in this letter with the highest standard of professionalism, integrity, and creativity.

I also expect you to regularly and proactively reach out to all ministry-related stakeholders in order to take feedback and identify potential solutions on issues of importance to them, including finding ways our government can reduce burdensome and unnecessary red tape and barriers that are hurting their members' ability to grow the economy and improve quality of life for the Albertans they serve.

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Together with you and our Caucus and Cabinet colleagues, I look forward to serving all Albertans to ensure our province remains one of the best places on earth to live, work and raise a family.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Danielle Smith".

Danielle Smith

Premier of Alberta

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