



ALBERTA
EDUCATION

*Office of the Minister
MLA, Red Deer-North*

February 28, 2023

Letter to parents – historic education investments in Budget 2023

Dear Alberta parents:

Today, the Government of Alberta released its annual budget, and as the Minister of Education, I wanted to tell you directly about our plan to set your children up for lifelong success.

The theme of this year's budget is securing the future. The budget shows how the government is going to make sure Albertans have good and well-paying jobs, and how we will improve our healthcare system, keep communities safe and ensure people have the supports they need to be successful in their lives. It also shows how we are going to help your children reach their full potential.

Record-breaking funding for education

Through Budget 2023, the government is providing a historic level of funding to the school system—more money than ever before. At the same time, know that our goal is to drive as much of this money as possible directly to the classroom and away from administrative costs, to help ensure taxpayer dollars achieve maximum benefit for students.

The department of Education's consolidated budget will be about \$8.8 billion; that's equal to \$44 million every day students are in school. It's also an increase of almost half a billion dollars over last year. Your children are the province's future leaders and innovators; it's our job to help them be all they can be, and we take that very seriously.

In total, we will increase the Education budget by nearly \$2 billion over the next three years. These significant increases will empower your local school authorities to hire more teachers and rein in growing class sizes. In total, the funding we are providing is enough for school authorities across Alberta to hire up to 3,000 education staff, including not only teachers, but educational assistants, bus drivers and school support staff too. This means students in every corner of the province will benefit from more focused time and attention at school.

Supporting diverse classrooms

We recognize Alberta's classrooms are becoming increasingly complex and diverse. A growing number of students have unique cognitive, social and emotional needs, and an increasing number of newcomers need support learning English as an additional language. Budget 2023 includes a new grant to help with these things. The government will provide \$126 million over three years, which your local school authorities will use to hire and train more support staff, including

specialists like counsellors, psychologists and interpreters.

Mental health supports

On a similar note, we know the pandemic has taken a toll on students' mental health, and some students also fell behind in school because of the COVID-19 disruptions. We are going to keep our promise to provide \$110 million over three years to address these issues. With the government's funding support, local school authorities and mental health service providers are collaborating to develop innovative ways to support student mental health at school. And because of the funding we have already provided, as well as the excellent work of Alberta's teachers, tens of thousands of elementary students have already managed to take back the learning and development they previously lost to the pandemic.

Affordability

Another issue that we are determined to help resolve through Budget 2023 is the rising cost of living. We are providing an additional \$414 million over the next three years to the funding your local school authorities receive for transporting students to and from school. With this substantial increase, more students will be able to take the bus to school and ride times will be shortened. What's more, we expect this funding will help school authorities reduce the fees they charge you for transportation.

Currently, for students to be eligible for government-funded busing service, the student must reside at least 2.4 kilometres from their designated school. Beginning in 2024, this will be reduced to one kilometre for kindergarten to Grade 6 students and two kilometres for grades 7 to 12 students. By lowering the distance eligibility, more families will benefit from provincial support.

Almost 33,000 students who are not currently using bus services will become eligible. About 47,000 students who are currently paying a fee to use bus services will also become eligible for provincial support, eliminating the current gap in service delivery and saving parents over \$20 million.

School authorities will need time to transition to the new criteria, so the changes will officially take effect September 1, 2024. However, any school authorities that can start transporting students under the new eligibility criteria this school year will be fully supported through Budget 2023.

Quality education for all students

I strongly believe that parents deserve a wide variety of options and a high standard of quality when it comes to their child's education. With this year's budget, the government has worked hard to incorporate the many different perspectives and opinions we've been hearing from parents. You play an integral role in your children's education and your viewpoints will always be valuable to the government.

Our increased investments in education will help enrich students' lives and prepare them for success beyond school. Budget 2023 is about securing Alberta's future, and in that same vein, the foundations for a rewarding career begin early in life, which means the education system is a critical starting point for all Albertans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Adriana LaGrange". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'A'.

Adriana LaGrange
Minister of Education