

**DATE:** April 25, 2017

**TO:** Board of Trustees

**FROM:** Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools

**SUBJECT:** Catholic Faith Alternative Program  
(Response to Request for Information #205)

**ORIGINATOR:** Trustee Michael Janz

**RESOURCE  
STAFF:** Karen Mills

**REFERENCE:** [School Act, Section 21\(1\)](#)

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**ISSUE**

This report is in response to a Trustee Request for Information.

**BACKGROUND**

At the February 28, 2017, meeting of the Edmonton Public School Board, Trustee Michael Janz submitted the following Request for Information:

That the Administration advise the Trustees whether or not the Minister of Education or *School Act* would permit a public school system to create a Catholic faith alternative program or operate a Catholic school within the public school system.

**CURRENT SITUATION**

On April 5, 2017, the Minister of Education responded that Section 21(1) of the *School Act* indicates that an alternative program means an education program that:

- a) Emphasizes a particular language, culture, religion or subject matter; or
- b) Uses a particular teaching philosophy, but that is not a special education program, a program referred to in Section 10 of the *School Act* or a program of religious education offered by a separate school board.

**KEY POINTS**

- It is the department's position that Section 21 of the *School Act* does not allow a public school board to create a Catholic faith alternative program.

**ATTACHMENTS**

ATTACHMENT I Letter of April 5, 2017 from the Minister of Education

KM:km

ALBERTA  
EDUCATION*Office of the Minister*

APR 05 2017

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Ms. Michelle Draper  
Board Chair  
Edmonton Public Schools  
Centre for Education  
1 Kingsway NW  
Edmonton AB T5H 4G9

Dear Ms. Draper:

Thank you for your March 10, 2017 letter on behalf of the Edmonton Public School Board, inquiring whether the *School Act* would permit a public school system to create a Catholic faith alternative program or operate a Catholic school within a public school system.

Section 21(1) of the *School Act* indicates that an alternative program means an education program that:

- a) emphasizes a particular language, culture, religion or subject matter; or
- b) uses a particular teaching philosophy, but that is not a special education program, a program referred to in Section 10 of the *School Act* or a program of religious education offered by a separate school board.

It is the department's position that Section 21 does not allow a public school board to create a Catholic faith alternative program. I encourage you to confer with your legal counsel on this matter.

I appreciate you taking the time to write, and I wish all Edmonton Public Schools students and staff continued success in the current school year.

Sincerely,

David Eggen  
Minister