

**DATE:** February 20, 2018

**TO:** Board of Trustees

**FROM:** Trustee Trisha Estabrooks

**SUBJECT:** Phasing Out Public Funding of Private Schools

**REFERENCE:** [Trustees' Handbook – Section 5.2.2 – Notices of Motion](#)

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#### **ISSUE**

Notice of motion was served at the February 6, 2018, Board meeting.

#### **BACKGROUND**

As a Board, we have championed values of inclusivity and accessibility — the basic tenets of public education.

On April 19, 2016, Trustees of the Edmonton Public School Board passed a motion supporting public funding to private schools be phased out and reinvested in public education. A letter was written to the Minister of Education, but no action has been taken by our provincial government.

#### **RATIONALE**

Currently, more than \$100 million of taxpayers' dollars is spent annually to subsidize the cost of private school education in Alberta. For every private school student in this province, the government pays 70 per cent of what a public student receives; the highest percentage of any jurisdiction in the country. This is money that should be spent, and arguably needs to be reinvested, to improve public classrooms and public education in our province.

Public education is meant to be inclusive and accessible for everyone. The notion of accessibility is absent from the private school model. Private schools can and do pick and choose their students and set their tuition rates. When a school is able to choose who can attend based on ability, income or faith, that same school should also lose its access to public funding. Public funding should belong to schools that use it to educate the public—all of us—no matter our backgrounds, faith or income.

Private schools have every right to exist in Alberta, and provide choice to some parents, students and families. Phasing out the funding of private schools does not remove the choice for families, rather, the choice remains: pay the higher tuition fee (to cover the cost left when the government stops funding private schools) or send your child to a publicly funded public school.

It is important that taxpayers' dollars are invested wisely. Our provincial government is drafting Budget 2018 and need to be aware of potential cost savings for our public education system. Furthermore, the NDP while in opposition raised concerns about the way the province funded private schools but have yet to commit to reviewing or changing the funding model. Additionally, there are those within the current opposition party who, if elected to form government, support equal funding of private and public education. Equally funding both the private and the public schools will seriously erode and compromise our public education system in a way that will have far reaching impacts on our children and our society.

**RECOMMENDATION**

**That the Edmonton Public Schools Board of Trustees continue its strong commitment to public education and advocate the provincial government begin phasing out public funding of private schools and reinvest that money in public classrooms.**

**OPTIONS**

1. Approve the recommendation.
2. Provide feedback and request changes to the recommendation for approval.

**NEXT STEPS**

Should the Board of Trustees approve the recommendation, a letter will be sent to the Minister of Education requesting public funding of private schools be phased out and reinvested in public classrooms. Also, a letter will be sent to leaders of all political parties stating the District's position.