

DATE: April 4, 2023

TO: The Board of Trustees

FROM: Advocacy Committee – Trustees Nelson (Chair), Kusiek and Ip

SUBJECT: Advocacy Committee Update

ORIGINATOR: Trustee Marsha Nelson, Advocacy Committee Chair

RESOURCE STAFF: Karen Mills

ISSUE

The Advocacy Committee wishes to provide the Board of Trustees with an update on the pre-election advocacy work completed by the committee.

BACKGROUND

The Advocacy Committee work plan identified three key areas of advocacy to be pursued this year. They included mental health, space needs and funding.

The Advocacy Committee committed to developing key messages, along with other communication materials as needed, including the materials developed by the previous Advocacy committee, for each area of focus and identifying target audiences and desired outcomes for all advocacy efforts. One item of focus was the development of “Questions to Ask Candidates”, along with messaging about what Edmonton Public Schools needs and advocacy efforts already made by the Board.

CURRENT SITUATION

The Advocacy Committee has created four one-page documents to be distributed to the general community both in hardcopy and electronic versions. The goal is to get the community to make Education an election issue for all parties. The pages provide key questions for the public to ask, backed by facts for context. The public can then make informed decisions on election day based on the responses they get from candidates.

KEY POINTS

- Trustees are encouraged to share advocacy materials with their School Councils.
- Trustees are encouraged to share the messages through their newsletters and social media accounts.
- Trustees are encouraged to share the pages with community partners who can help their communities be more involved in the election.
- Trustees will be given hard copies to distribute as they see fit.

ATTACHMENTS

ATTACHMENT I Candidate Questions - Public Education
ATTACHMENT II Candidate Questions - Mental Health
ATTACHMENT III Candidate Questions - Infrastructure
ATTACHMENT IV Candidate Questions - Funding

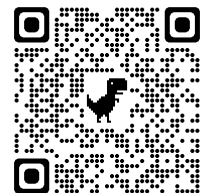
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IMAGINE WHAT'S POSSIBLE:
Public dollars going to public schools
that welcome and support all students



With adequate government funding for public education,
it's possible

Help Edmonton Public Schools Trustees make
EDUCATION
an election issue for all parties



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PUBLIC EDUCATION MATTERS

What should I ask candidates?

QUESTION

1. What does “choice in education” mean to your party? Does “choice” to you mean choice within the public system; or choice of public, private, or charter schools?

FAST FACTS

- Investing in public education is **investing in choice for ALL students**.
 - Public dollars belong in public education.
 - With more than 25 alternative programs to choose from and hundreds of options within regular programs, Edmonton Public Schools students have access to academic programs, arts and language programs, sports alternative and faith-based programs.
 - Public schools provide no- or low-cost access to all programs.
- Investing in public education is **investing in community**.
 - Public schools welcome all students, regardless of a student’s background, abilities or economic status.
- Investing in public education is **investing in our future**.
 - Edmonton Public students do more than achieve great academic results. They also learn citizenship and the importance of hearing and learning from diverse voices.
- Investing in public schools is **investing in accountability**.
 - Publicly elected trustees govern public schools.
 - We publicly report our budgets and achievement results.
 - We engage with students, staff, families and community members on decisions that affect them.



EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

IMAGINE WHAT'S POSSIBLE:
Adequate supports for all students
where and when they need them



With adequate government funding for public education,
it's possible

Help Edmonton Public Schools Trustees make
EDUCATION
an election issue for all parties



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MENTAL HEALTH IN SCHOOLS

What should I ask candidates?

QUESTIONS

1. One in four youth will be affected by mental illness.¹ What is your party's plan to provide adequate, sustainable supports for kids in public schools?
2. Will your party commit to using healthcare dollars for mental health so schools don't have to use education dollars that should go to classrooms?
3. What is your party's plan to provide a coordinated approach between all ministries that support the mental health of students (e.g. Health, Education, Children's Services)?

FAST FACTS

- Mental illness or poor mental health can significantly impact a student's ability to learn and thrive in school. 38% of Division students told us they were not doing well.²
- Asking teachers and school staff to provide mental health care adds to the already heavy demands in classrooms. Educators are not mental health professionals. Access to dedicated mental health professionals in schools would provide more effective care for students and allow teachers to focus on education.
- The government's Child and Youth Well-Being Panel looked into how the pandemic has affected young people. Eight of the 10 recommendations call for increasing access to supports for young people and strengthening ways schools can respond. It's time to put these recommendations into action and see greater mental health support delivered right in our schools.

¹ Mental Health Foundation (mentalhealthfoundation.ca), accessed March 16, 2023

² 2021-22 Division Feedback Survey

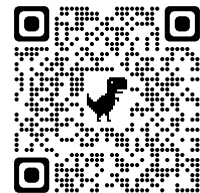


IMAGINE WHAT'S POSSIBLE:
School construction that keeps pace
with growing student enrolment



With adequate government funding for public education,
it's possible

Help Edmonton Public Schools Trustees make
EDUCATION
an election issue for all parties



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PUBLIC SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE

What should I ask candidates?

QUESTION

1. How will you address the space shortage at Edmonton Public Schools?
2. Over 70% of Edmonton Public's schools are 50 years old or older. How will your party provide adequate funds for the maintenance or replacement of these buildings?

FAST FACTS

- We are one of the fastest growing school divisions in Alberta. We welcomed almost 4500 students this school year, and are expecting about the same for the 2023-24 school year. That's enough students to fill **12 elementary schools** or **4 high schools** each year!
- The Province funds new school construction, decides when and where schools are built and controls how much money we get to repair our older buildings.
- In the 2021 and 2022 provincial budgets, EPSB did not get funding for any new schools and we're feeling the impacts.
- In Budget 2023, we received funding for one K-9 school. That will provide 950 seats. However, it takes 3 to 5 years to build a new school.
- Because funding for school space has not kept up with our growth, the Division has:
 - added as many modular classrooms as possible
 - had to introduce a lottery in 7 schools because they can't fit all the children in the neighbourhood
- 70% of our schools are more than 50 years old. It would cost about \$900 million to modernize all of our buildings.

See the Division's Capital and Facilities Plans at <https://epsb.ca/ourdistrict/results/capitalplanning/>



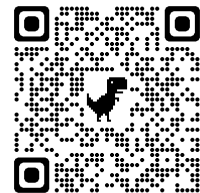
EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

IMAGINE WHAT'S POSSIBLE:
Every public school student gets what
they need to thrive



**With adequate government funding for public education,
it's possible**

Help Edmonton Public Schools Trustees make
EDUCATION
an election issue for all parties



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PUBLIC SCHOOL FUNDING

What should I ask candidates?

QUESTIONS

1. Edmonton Public Schools is facing rapidly growing enrolment. How will your party ensure every student gets what they need to thrive?
2. What is your party's plan to ensure children who need additional support get the resources they need?

FAST FACTS

- Until recently, the total Education budget was frozen.
- The current funding formula doesn't keep pace with a growing school division and we are not funded for the actual number of students we have in our schools. We are not adequately funded to support students who require specialized supports.
- In eight years (2012-2020), Alberta went from having the third highest per student spending (inflation adjusted) in the country to ranking last.¹
- 77% of Division funds go to support students in the classroom. The remainder covers building operations and maintenance, fixed costs like utilities, insurance and software licenses as well as administrative costs required for Division operations.

¹ Fraser Institute, [Education Spending in Public Schools in Canada 2022](#)



EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS