

Date	March 17, 2026
To	Board of Trustees
From	Ron Thompson, Superintendent of Schools
Subject	Response to Request for Information Regarding Trustee Election Costs
Originator	Todd Burnstad, Chief Financial Officer
Resource Staff	Andre Joseph, Amanda Wong
Reference	December 9, 2025 Request for Information March 3, 2026 Motion re: Request for Information Follow-up on Election Costs Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act (Bill 20)

ISSUE

Trustee Sawyer made the following request for information at the December 9, 2025, Board meeting:

Related to the most recent trustee election, my understanding is that the City of Edmonton coordinates the Trustee election in conjunction with the Municipal election, then they invoice the Division for this cost. As such, can the administration provide the Division's share of the most recent election cost, and how this compares to the last trustee election. Secondly, does the Division receive funding from the Province to cover this cost and if so, is that based on the actual cost or a different formula?

At the March 3, 2026, Board meeting, the response to the above request for information was approved to be brought forward as an information report.

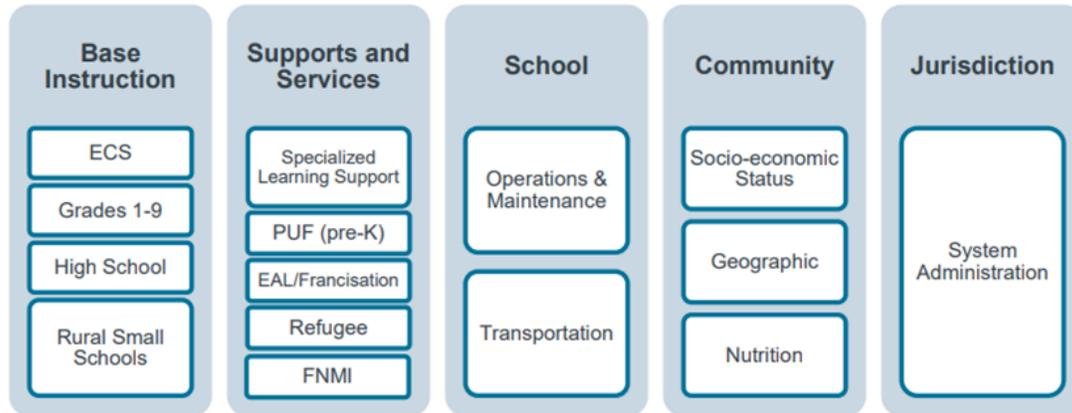
BACKGROUND

Under a long-standing cost-sharing agreement, Edmonton Public Schools is responsible for 29 per cent of the City of Edmonton's election costs. For the 2025 municipal election, these expenses have surged due to two primary factors:

- **System Upgrades:** Original budget increases were driven by necessary improvements to the Election Logistics Management System (ELMS).
- **Legislative Mandates:** The Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act (Bill 20-2024) further inflated costs by banning electronic tabulators. This change required manual counting, separate ballot boxes for each race, and a significant increase in staffing.

Because these rising costs must be funded through the System Administration Grant, which for the 2025-2026 school year is capped at 3.20 per cent of the prior year’s expenses, the Division worked closely with the City to identify operational efficiencies in advance of the most recent election.

Figure 1.0 - Alberta Education Funding Model



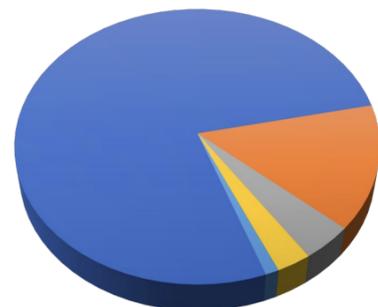
Alberta Education’s funding model consists of the above major grant allocations (Figure 1.0) including System Administration. The System Administration program comprises all administrative costs related to operations of the Division including the responsibilities of the Board, The Superintendent, the Chief Financial Officer and their respective staff. Facilities and equipment related to these responsibilities are also funded within the program. No other funding can be transferred to the System Administration program however surpluses in the program can be carried forward to future years.

Figure 1.1 - Spring Budget 2025-26 Expenses by Program

Expenses by program

(all dollar amounts are expressed in thousands)

	2025-2026	
	\$	%
ECS - Grade 12 Instruction	1,131,441	78.3%
Operations and Maintenance	201,782	14.0%
Transportation	56,286	3.9%
Board and System Administration	41,349	2.9%
External Services	14,938	0.9%
	1,445,796	100%

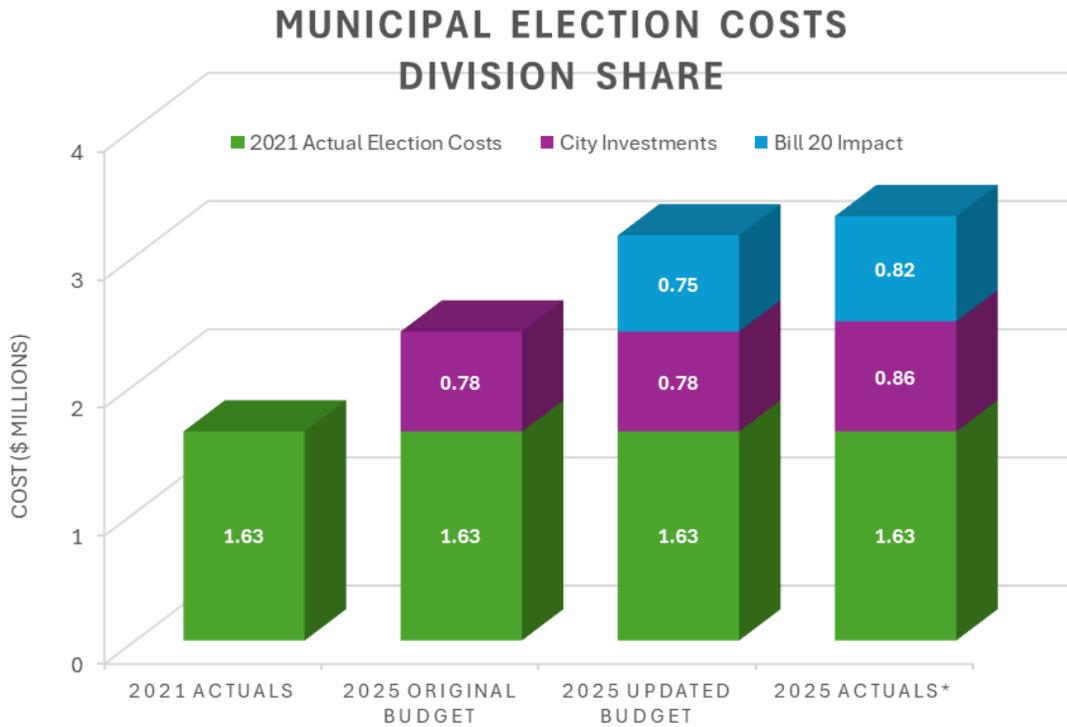


The Division’s overall funding is budgeted by program (Figure 1.1). In the most recent budget, approximately 78 per cent was allocated to Instruction flowing directly to schools while fixed costs for Operations and maintenance as well as Transportation are partially funded by targeted grants. The System Administration grant is specifically targeted to cover the costs of governance and central administration while external

services are self funded programs. For the 2025-2026 budget, Board and System Administration expenses represented 2.9 per cent of the total budget (falling below the 3.2 per cent cap).

CURRENT SITUATION

Figure 1.2 - Municipal Elections Costs

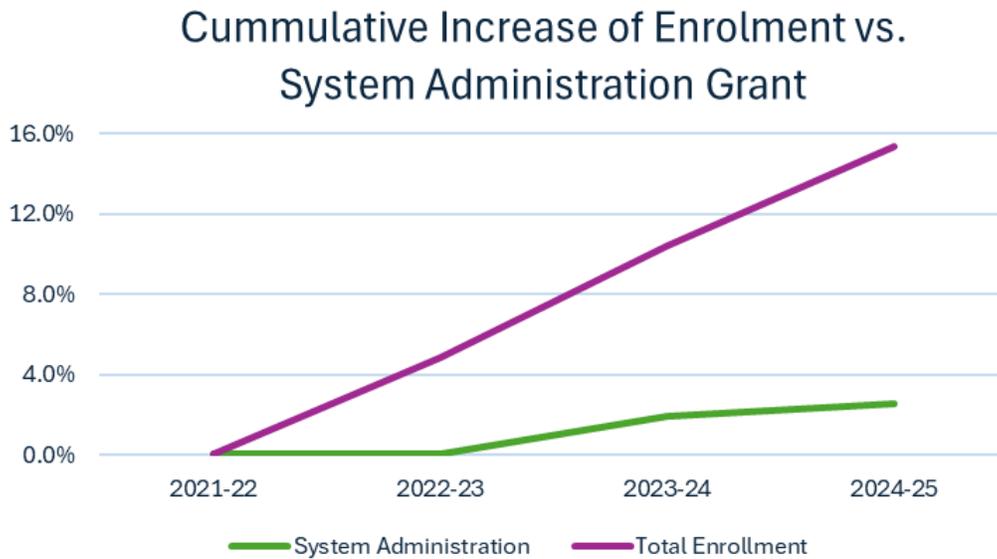


*2025 Actuals increase allocation is based on the 2025 updated budget percentage as no breakdown of actual costs was provided by the City of Edmonton

Since the 2021 municipal election, the Division’s portion of the elections cost increased from \$1.63 million to \$3.31 million (Figure 1.2) for the 2025 municipal election. This represents a 103.07 per cent increase where approximately \$0.82 million of the increase is attributable to the Municipal affairs statutes act (based on the 2025 updated budget percentage).

The Division receives no dedicated funding for election costs, requiring these expenses to be drawn exclusively from the System Administration Grant. Because this grant is strictly capped and targeted for governance and central administration, it offers no flexibility; any election cost overages directly reduce the funding available for essential central operations. Under current regulations, no other funding sources may be utilized to bridge this gap.

Figure 1.3 Enrolment and System Administration Percentage Increase



Since 2021, the Division has seen a 15.37 per cent surge in enrolment, which has naturally increased the administrative demand for staffing and infrastructure. However, funding has not kept pace; the System Administration Grant grew by only 2.58 per cent over the same period. This widening gap compounded the financial burden of Trustee elections, which are projected to consume 8.49 per cent of the grant in 2025 - nearly double their 4.30 per cent share in 2021.

RECENT UPDATES

The 2026 Provincial budget was announced on February 26, 2026. Included with this announcement was some information about grant increases and grant reallocations including a 5 per cent reduction to the System Administration Grant effective for the 2026-2027 school year. The announcement highlighted this change as *“underscoring the importance of working collectively to identify efficiencies in the school system.”*

The Division has been able to operate within the System Administration grant, however, the recent announcement of the System Administration Grant reduction along with rising administrative costs place pressure on the Division's ability to resource central administrative functions necessary to support a large school division.

TB: ja