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WARD D Trisha Estabrooks  
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April 28, 2022

Honourable Adriana LaGrange  
Minister of Education  
228 Legislature Building  
10800 – 97 Avenue  
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Dear Minister LaGrange:

### **Request for timely and equitable funding for refugee and displaced students**

The war and human suffering in the world is difficult to hear about and has tragic, real-life consequences. Unfortunately, it is clear that the need for Edmonton Public Schools, and all school divisions, to continue to welcome refugees and globally displaced students will remain a reality for the foreseeable future. This need has been heightened recently with the arrival in Edmonton of families from Afghanistan and Ukraine.

Edmonton Public Schools does our best to welcome all new students, including refugees and globally displaced students. We offer supports from the moment a student registers to help them adjust to all the changes they are facing and recover from the experiences that prompted their move. This aligns with the government's Child and Youth Well-being Panel recognition that schools play an important role in the mental health and well-being of all students.

Unfortunately, the weighted moving average funding formula does not provide timely support for new students registering in our schools after the September count date.

While our Board was heartened to hear your announcement on April 14 of possible funding for Ukrainian children, we noted that it leaves out refugee students from other areas of the world. These students need support as well.

The announcement also advised that schools should support Ukrainian students' mental health needs through *existing* school authority budgets. Edmonton Public Schools will do that. However, it's important to recognize that mental health funding and services for current students is already insufficient. Refugee students have been through a lot by the time they reach us. To then place them into an already strained system of mental health supports potentially only adds to their hardship.

At Edmonton Public Schools, we want to do our part to create a welcoming space for all displaced and refugee students. We will always do our best to welcome and support every student who comes to our school. However, timely funding is an important tool to help Edmonton Public Schools provide that support.

Given that, we ask that you put in place a per student special allocation granted immediately upon registration, retroactive to October 1, 2021, to support globally displaced children and refugee students being welcomed into our schools.

We also ask that you put in place additional funding to support the mental health needs of refugee and displaced students.

We believe public schools play a valuable role in welcoming newcomers and their children into our communities. The sooner and the more robustly we can support students displaced by war and conflict, the sooner they can be settled, contributing members of our community and province.

Sincerely,



Trisha Estabrooks  
Board Chair

KM:mj

- c. Darrel Robertson, Superintendent, Edmonton Public Schools  
Marilyn Dennis, President, Alberta School Boards Association  
Vivian Abboud, Chief Executive Officer, Alberta School Boards Association  
Dennis McNeil, President, Public School Boards' Association of Alberta  
Troy Tait, Executive Director, Public School Boards' Association of Alberta