

June 25, 2021

Jeff Bisanz and Natalie Prytuluk  
Co-chairs, Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care

Via email: [natalie.prytuluk@epsb.ca](mailto:natalie.prytuluk@epsb.ca)  
[jeff.bisanz@ualberta.ca](mailto:jeff.bisanz@ualberta.ca)

Dear Ms Prytuluk and Mr. Bisanz:

### Letter of Support for Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care (ECELC)

Caring for and educating children requires collaboration. Everyone in our society has a role and a responsibility for this important work. At Edmonton Public Schools, collaboration is one of our cornerstone values and we are grateful for the many partners we work with to help ensure that every child is successful and can go on to have a life of dignity and fulfilment.

We have had the pleasure to work with the Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care (the ECELC) and share the belief that high quality early learning and care can and should be a game changer for children and their families.

Edmonton Public Schools is committed to high quality early learning opportunities for children across Edmonton. Priority 1 of the Division's Strategic Plan is, "Foster growth and success for every student by supporting their journey from early learning through high school completion and beyond." The first goal under this priority is, "An Excellent Start to Learning," with the desired outcome being that more children enter Grade 1 reaching emotional, social, intellectual and physical developmental milestones.

At the May 25, 2021, meeting, the Board affirmed their support of early learning by approving an updated [Early Years policy](#). The policy recognizes that, "the Division is an early childhood service provider as set out by Alberta Education and the provincial funding manual. There are many community organizations who serve as important partners in the provision of early years programming for families in the Edmonton community. The Division acknowledges the diversity of perspective, expertise and services of these partners and values the opportunity to collaborate with them to provide additional support for children and families. The Board acknowledges the importance of strategic collaboration with community partners and various orders of government, including municipal and provincial, to advance funding, access and guidelines to support the needs of children and families in the community."

In our 2021-2022 budget, Trustees made early learning a priority by directing \$40 million dollars to Kindergarten to Grade 3 education. Although these students typically make up 30 per cent of our learners, they will be receiving 37 per cent of the weighted enrollment allocation.

Our Board has also strongly expressed to the Provincial government [our concerns](#) about the reduction to Program Unit Funding (PUF) and the detrimental impacts it will have on children, their families and our education system. For example, last year, 900 fewer children were able to access our programming because of the changes to PUF.

Even with the services we can provide, we know needs and barriers to high quality, affordable child care still exist in the community. The Board of Trustees agrees with ECELC that Edmonton needs an integrated system of early learning and care for its young children and families.

The ECELC has shared with us their vision of developing a system of early learning and care for all children that is high in quality, universally available, accessible, affordable, and responsive to the diversity of individual children and their families. To build a system that can bring together the resources to provide accessible, sustainable, high quality early learning and care will require systemic, coordinated solutions.

To this end, the Council has developed recommended actions for the City of Edmonton and for school boards to strengthen partnerships in support of a system of early learning and care, to reduce barriers for families of young children, and to contribute to eliminating poverty.

At our June 22 public meeting, our Board of Trustees unanimously endorsed ECELC's Recommended Actions for the City of Edmonton. We also unanimously endorsed asking our Administration to collaborate with ECELC to explore the feasibility of implementing the Recommended Actions for Education. Next steps, including advocacy on the Actions of Education, will likely fall to the next Board of Trustees as they undertake the work set in motion by the decisions made by the current Board on June 22. We want to thank you for your leadership on this important issue and we look forward to continuing working together collaboratively.

We look forward to working with the ECELC, the City and our fellow school divisions to provide support and remove any barriers to success for our youngest citizens and their families.

Sincerely,



Trisha Estabrooks  
Board Chair

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