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June 15, 2022

Honourable Sean Fraser
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6
Via email: sean.fraser@parl.gc.ca

Dear Minister Fraser,

Request for education and mental health 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. 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 of families from Afghanistan and Ukraine.

Edmonton Public Schools does our best to welcome all new students, including refugees and globally displaced students, as we're sure is the case with all school divisions across our country. At EPSB, 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. Unfortunately, apart from funding recently announced specifically for Ukrainian refugee students arriving this spring, provincial education funding does not provide timely and adequate support for all new students registering in our schools after the September count date.

Alberta's provincial government also recently 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 education and health funding is key to helping Edmonton Public Schools provide that support.

Given that, we are requesting federal government funding to support the education and health needs of globally displaced children and refugee students being welcomed into our schools. We acknowledge

that Education is traditionally a provincial responsibility, but given the impact across our country of the arrival of large numbers of refugees and displaced students, we feel federal support is called for.

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 communities.

Sincerely,



Trisha Estabrooks
Board Chair

KM/mj

- c. Honourable Randy Boissonnault, Minister of Tourism, Associate Minister of Finance
- Ziad Aboultaif, MP – Edmonton Manning
- Michael Cooper, MP – St. Albert-Edmonton
- Blake Desjarlais, MP – Edmonton Griesbach
- Matt Jeneroux, MP – Edmonton Riverbend
- Honourable Mike Lake – Edmonton-Wetaskiwin
- Kelly McCauley, MP – Edmonton West
- Heather McPherson, MP – Edmonton Strathcona
- Honourable Tim Uppal – Edmonton Mill Woods
- Honourable Adriana LaGrange, Minister of Education, Government of Alberta
- Darrel Robertson, Superintendent, Edmonton Public Schools
- Marilyn Dennis, President, Alberta School Boards Association
- Vivian Abboud, Chief Executive Officer, Alberta School Boards Association