

September 14, 2020

Dear parents, guardians and families,

Earlier this month, the federal government announced it was making \$2 billion available to support a safe re-entry into schools across the country. Edmonton Public Schools will receive \$37.4 million of this funding, which is just over three per cent of our operating budget.

These are welcome funds for our Division. We are faced with many unexpected costs for the 2020-2021 school year because of COVID-19.

### How we are allocating funds

Our top priority is to direct as much of the federal funding towards the classroom as possible, so schools can address their local needs and focus on supporting students. About \$20 million will flow directly to schools. The funds will be made available to schools as soon as possible. In some cases, schools may hire extra staff to support students, or custodians to support our new cleaning requirements. We do know that any additional staff we are able to hire won't have a significant impact on decreasing class sizes.

Here are some highlights about how we plan to use the remaining \$17.4 million:

- Schools normally budget for supply, or substitute, time in their budgets when staff are sick. This school year the Division will cover all sick time from the central-office budget, freeing up funds that were previously budgeted for in school budgets.
- The central office will cover any additional staffing changes that were made to support the quarterly model for online learning; any new staff hired will not be paid for out of a school budget.
- The Division has an equity fund, which is used to address specific needs in schools. We will add \$6 million to the existing \$7.8 million.
- The Division will continue to centrally manage and supply all the necessary personal protective equipment and cleaning supplies that schools will need for the entire school year, without impact to individual school budgets.
- In some schools, we've rented portable sinks for the year, to support our commitment to good hand hygiene as one method to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Some of the federal funding will be used to rent these sinks.
- The Division is also increasing the amount of time ventilation systems are running every day. We will use some of the federal funds to cover the anticipated increase in utility costs.

- We will also use federal funds to support technology needs for online teachers and students, which will include purchasing a limited number of Chromebooks, along with other technology supports.
- Finally, we will put an additional \$2 million to develop high school online lesson plans and resources.

### **School start up**

We're one week into the start of the school year and I am grateful to our staff for all the work they've done to get our buildings and online environments up and running. Your dedication in getting your kids ready for school, no matter what environment they're learning in, is appreciated. This school year will be unlike any other, but I know that together, we are committed to ensuring our more than 105,000 students will succeed this year.

Sincerely,



Darrel Robertson  
Superintendent of Schools