

Valley Creek School Parent Council
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May 21, 2025

Minister of Education
Honourable Demetrios Nicolaides
228 Legislature Building
10800-97 Avenue NW
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6
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780-427-5010

Dear Honourable Minister Nicolaides,

On April 27th, you addressed school council members at the Alberta School Councils' Association (ASCA) Spring Symposium. ASCA supports over 1,500 school councils and 50,000 volunteer parents across Alberta. It is a vital organization that fosters meaningful parental engagement and advocacy within our education system.

In 2022, the UCP government significantly reduced ASCA's funding, cutting provincial support by 90 percent. Prior to that, funding had already been reduced by 75 percent to \$170,000, before being slashed again to just \$15,000 for a one-time pandemic survey project. Since then, ASCA has received no provincial funding—a complete withdrawal of support for Alberta's parent voice in public education.

Despite these devastating cuts, more than 120 parents attended this year's virtual Spring Symposium to learn how to better support our children. What was once a free event for registered school council members now costs \$95 per participant. School councils must either draw from their \$500 Alberta School Council Engagement Grant or pay out-of-pocket to attend, leaving approximately \$400 for the rest of the year to fund vital resources and workshops for parents on mental health, well-being, cyberbullying, and supports for English as an Additional Language (EAL) families.

Your presentation at the Symposium—delivered without any acknowledgement of ASCA's defunding or commitment to reversing it—felt disingenuous. To speak of the importance of parental involvement, while your ministry continues to withhold funding from the very organization that represents us, is deeply disappointing. It was a missed opportunity to demonstrate meaningful engagement with Alberta families.

Minister, Alberta's education system is at a breaking point. Classrooms are chronically overcrowded, student needs are increasingly complex, and teacher burnout is rampant. Budget 2025 has earmarked \$9.9 billion for education. However, the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) has indicated that a 15.8 percent increase—raising the budget to \$11.35 billion—is necessary to bring Alberta's per-student funding in line with the national average.

While building new schools is essential, the \$8.6 billion School Construction Accelerator Program will take years before families see its benefits. In the meantime, students and teachers need immediate investment in mental health supports, educational assistants, specialist staffing, and smaller class sizes. Bricks and mortar won't address today's urgent classroom realities.

Alberta teachers rejected a proposed contract settlement from a government mediator. Within weeks, they may vote to strike, possibly resulting in cancelled extracurriculars, rotating strikes, or a full walkout just before Grade 12 diploma exams. Alberta families cannot afford the consequences of this manufactured crisis. Teachers are the cornerstone of our education system, and they have received only a five percent raise over the past decade, while the cost of living has skyrocketed. They deserve fair compensation and working conditions.

As Chair of the Valley Creek School Council, and with the support of the school councils listed below, we want our voices heard in shaping the future of public education. We respectfully urge you to:

1. Restore ASCA's provincial funding to ensure Alberta school councils can continue advocating meaningfully on behalf of our children.
2. I invite you to host a virtual town hall with ASCA members. Alberta families deserve more than political soundbites. We need authentic dialogue and a demonstrated commitment to bold, immediate action.

Together, we can build a stronger, more responsive education system that truly meets the needs of Alberta students.

Respectfully,

Shelley Wiart, Valley Creek School Chair, on behalf of:

School Councils

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