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June 28, 2024

Honourable Demetrios Nicolaides
Minister of Education
10800 – 97 Avenue
Edmonton AB, T5K 2B6

Dear Minister Nicolaides:

Thank you for meeting with Calgary Board of Education (CBE) Board of Trustees on Tuesday, June 4, 2024 to discuss possible solutions to address CBE's urgent need for learning spaces.

For the upcoming school year, the system utilization rate across our 251 schools will reach 98 per cent, a value that you will recognize as being well above the preferred targeted mid-to-high 80 per cent range. By 2026, projections indicate the system utilization will climb to 103 per cent, pushing schools still further above the preferred range. As a reflection of this growth, the number of schools in overflow this year alone has risen by an alarming 67 per cent, climbing from 21 to 35 schools in overflow. This means many more students are being redesignated to attend a school further away from their home. As enrolment continues to climb, the CBE needs additional schools and modular classrooms to keep pace with our growing student population. As a system, the CBE continues to look for every opportunity to find additional learning spaces. Schools are being resourceful – converting learning commons, foyers, music rooms, stages in gymnasiums, staff rooms and more into classrooms. This, however, has a negative impact on educational opportunities.

As a follow-up to our recent meeting, we are seeking greater clarity on the CBE's capital projects announced on March 1, 2024 that are moving through the staged capital approval process (pre-planning, planning, design and full construction). Your follow-up letter to the CBE on April 17, 2024 states that funding for some of these projects would only be approved for 2026. This is concerning. Here are some examples to illustrate our concern. The Annie Gale School modernization project received "planning" approval in 2023 and now will only receive "design" funding in 2026. This late design approval year will significantly delay project completion. Similarly, the Saddle Ridge middle school project received "pre-planning" approval in 2023, and the April 17 letter informed us that the "planning" funding was only for 2026.

Given the urgent need for learning spaces, it is important that projects advance to the next phase expeditiously. For the two projects highlighted above, the

next phase should commence immediately upon completion of the pre-planning and planning deliverables approved in 2023. This would help ensure that these projects do not become inactive for almost two years between stages. We are hopeful that you can review this timeline and provide us with degree of assurance that these 2026 funding approvals might be advanced earlier.

We believe this assurance would go a long way to align with the intent behind the staged approach to school project delivery. It was our understanding that this approach was not intended to delay implementation but to the contrary, allow school projects to move swiftly to the next stage in construction when ready rather than wait for the next capital approval cycle. Given our urgent need for spaces, it is important to be able to move through these stages as quickly as possible to help manage long-term space planning to best support the students we serve.

This then brings us to the matter of modular classrooms. Since capital plan requests are only approved annually in the spring, the addition of modular classrooms are instrumental to provide short-term relief of enrolment pressures until such time as permanent schools can be approved and built. We appreciated the discussion on the importance of modular classrooms and look forward to the possibility of receiving approval and funding for additional modular classrooms later this month. While these classrooms will not be ready until next spring, there is no doubt this will be welcome news for many families.

Thank you again for the opportunity to discuss the need for learning spaces and possible solutions.

We appreciate your assistance with the Premier's Office to invite Premier Smith to visit Jack James High School to discuss our space challenges and tour the facilities. The CBE is proud to offer students a wide variety of dual credit and unique pathways that enable students to complete high school their own way. We would be delighted to host you and Premier Smith at any one of our high schools and demonstrate how CBE is a leader in Alberta in preparing students for their future careers.

Sincerely,



Patricia Bolger
Board Chair





ALBERTA
EDUCATION

*Office of the Minister
MLA, Calgary - Bow*

AR 125494

October 16, 2024

Ms. Patricia Bolger
Chair
Calgary Board of Education
1221 - 8 Street SW
Calgary AB T2R 0L4

Dear Ms. Bolger:

Thank you for your letter regarding the need for more learning spaces in Calgary and the timelines for approved capital projects. I appreciate the opportunity to respond.

Alberta's government recognizes the urgent need for school space in the metro areas. I trust that the recent announcement of additional modular classrooms will provide much needed space at some of your most highly utilized schools. However, I also recognize that this is not a complete solution.

Budget 2024 committed \$2.1 billion for school construction to create approximately 33,000 new student spaces. The School Construction Accelerator Program, announced on September 18, commits an additional \$8.6 billion for school construction to create more new and updated student spaces. Projects will be announced over the next three years in Budgets 2025, 2026, and 2027.

As part of the program, we have also made changes to the funding process for capital projects to speed up the construction of new schools. Funding for projects that are ready to proceed to the next phase of funding can be approved in-year without having to wait for the next budget cycle.

Specific school announcements will occur when the annual capital plan is released; however, we anticipate that 30 new schools and five to eight modernizations will be announced each year for the next three years, beginning in Budget 2025. I look forward to announcing new projects and the acceleration of current projects for the Calgary Board of Education.

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Ms. Patricia Bolger
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As you are aware, Budget 2024 included funding approvals for five of your board's top capital priorities; however, two of these projects were not scheduled to receive funding until future fiscal years. Alberta's government recognizes that these projects are a priority and there is a commitment to see them completed. Under the new School Construction Accelerator Program, it is anticipated these two projects will receive funding to proceed sooner than originally announced. There will be further communication on this in the coming weeks.

If you require further information, please contact Allison Matichuk, Capital Planning Manager, at allison.matichuk@gov.ab.ca or 780-643-1453 (toll free by first dialing 310-0000).

I wish the Calgary Board of Education board, staff, and students all the best throughout the 2024/25 school year.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Demetrios Nicolaides". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Demetrios" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Nicolaides".

Demetrios Nicolaides ECA PhD
Minister of Education

cc: Honourable Peter Guthrie, Minister of Infrastructure