



**Under-investing in education is an issue.**

## Facing the Education Facts

### FACT

81% of publicly funded school authorities are reporting a transportation deficit, with an average deficit of more than \$500,000 in 2018.

### FACT

79% of publicly-funded school authorities are reporting an inclusive education deficit, with the average deficit at more than \$2 million in 2018.

When Facing the Education Facts, it's no secret that Alberta has one of the best education systems in the world. The Conference Board of Canada states: "Education is typically seen as the most powerful route to improving private and public prosperity and well-being."

Education affects social outcomes. Higher educational attainment has been linked to increased civic engagement, higher life satisfaction, and lower crime rates. Moreover, there is evidence that education contributes directly to better decisions that lead to healthier and longer lives. K-12 education is an important contributor to well-being and a critical force for driving success in communities.

People with solid education experience not only earn higher incomes, but also contribute exceptionally to business innovation, productivity, and national economic performance. There is a strong and direct relationship between educational attainment and economic growth in our society.

Investment in K-12 education pays dividends in social and economic outcomes – today and for the future. Well-educated children today become the backbone of our future labour force, the heart of our communities, and the mind of our future leaders. It only makes sense to fund education as the most important investment our province can make.

Zone and local advocacy efforts are on behalf on their own boards, in addition to ASBA provincial advocacy work through committee and president as ASBA spokesperson.

## **Democratically elected school boards have one priority: student success.**

Governance of K-12 education in Alberta has been entrusted to locally elected trustees since the late 1800s. School boards meet and make decisions in open meetings, ensuring the public and media have access to debate and insight into how taxpayer money is allocated. This influence is lost when locally elected school boards are eliminated or when their authority is reduced.

No two communities are alike, and the needs of one education authority can differ from those of another. "One size does not fit all."

Local education governance empowers local community members and parents to be involved in providing the assurance that education is meeting the unique needs of their children. Education is a highly funded government portfolio, and the governance provided by locally elected school boards helps to ensure a transparent and accountable system.

Centralization of control, at Provincial level, is by definition an erosion of local voice, and greatly affects the education of children and youth in our unique communities.

Including education oversight in the long list of responsibilities already held by MLAs or MPs is untenable when questions or concerns at the grassroots arise. This can be seen in ill-informed decisions at the provincial level to make cuts to education and programming that will have drastic and differing effects on students within each community. Without an understanding of community needs, decisions made by other orders of government can be devastating, particularly when the local context is not understood. One method and one lens does not work for all situations.

### **FACT**

Rural communities have unique needs and education funding must allow for flexibility and equity.

### **FACT**

74% of publicly-funded school boards are reporting a Plant, Operations and Maintenance deficit, with an average deficit of nearly \$2.4 million in 2018;

### **FACT**

Deferred maintenance of school buildings continues to escalate at a serious and alarming pace across Alberta. Children deserve proper learning conditions to reach their potential.

## **A few important issues to note:**

1. School division funding is determined by a formula set by the provincial government. This does not work well because each school authority has its own unique circumstances and student composition. A funding review is critically needed now to be effective and equitable.
2. Specialized support for Alberta's youngest and vulnerable children stops at 6 years of age (Per Unit Funding PUF). It is proven that Early Learning supports make a big difference in student achievement over the child's lifetime..
3. Funding to assist English Language Learners has been cut down to 5 years per student. With an increasing newcomer population, more language funding is needed, not less.

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