

March 2019

Issue: School boards are chronically underfunded, and on the heels of an election, education is not the place to make cuts. Locally-elected school boards are urging government to invest in education.

SAMPLE key messages about funding – for voluntary rural school board use *PLEASE FEEL FREE TO ADD OR REMOVE MESSAGING AS YOU SEE FIT FOR YOUR LOCAL CONTEXT*****

- *[INSERT SCHOOL BOARD NAME]* believe(s) in funding education to prepare Alberta’s next generation for success.
- Albertans want a strong and diversified economy. There is no better way to guarantee our future than by investing in education.
- *[INSERT SCHOOL BOARD NAME]* believe(s) every student deserves the best opportunities to learn, no matter what needs they may have, no matter what part of the province they are from.
- *[INSERT SCHOOL BOARD NAME]* believe(s) our students deserve to have the resources needed to equip them for a diversified economy.
- Even in times of fiscal restraint, education is not the place to cut—it’s the place to invest.
- For too long, many school boards have had to make difficult funding decisions, like choosing between fixing a leaky roof, or hiring an educational assistant.
- For example, at *[INSERT SCHOOL BOARD or SCHOOL NAME]*, *[INSERT DETAILS ABOUT LOCAL FUNDING ISSUE]*
- These should not be choices we have to make on the backs of

students.

- [INSERT SCHOOL BOARD NAME] believe(s) school boards need to have the flexibility to be able to make the best choices for their students. We can't do this with the way we are funded right now, and one size does not fit all.
- Many rural schools in Alberta are facing decreasing student enrolment, but that doesn't change the size of our schools. With the current funding model, we need to find creative ways to heat our spaces and keep the lights on.
- In fact, at [INSERT SCHOOL BOARD NAME], we are part of the 74 per cent of public, separate and francophone school boards reporting a Plant Operations and Maintenance deficit. Our POM deficit is roughly [INSERT DEFICIT].
- In some cases the situation is so dire, the loss of five students could mean the loss of a whole program. This isn't fair to the students we continue to ready for Alberta's future economy.
- *[INSERT ADDITIONAL DETAILS THAT TELL THE STORY OF THE LOCAL CONTEXT]*

What government can do to make this happen:

- [INSERT SCHOOL BOARD NAME] is urging government to complete a comprehensive funding formula review, in partnership with school boards.
- On behalf of students, [INSERT SCHOOL BOARD NAME] asks that the government provide seamless, integrated services from the Ministry of Health and from Alberta Health Services.

- *[INSERT LOCAL FUNDING SOLUTIONS IF YOU HAVE THEM]*

Supplemental messaging:

- Whether from rural or urban/metro settings, schools across Alberta are faced with funding restraints.
- For example, [INSERT LOCAL EXAMPLE].
- At [INSERT SCHOOL BOARD NAME], we have to find creative ways to pay for basic necessities like programming or modular classrooms, which can lead to huge deficits down the road. That is not what [INSERT SCHOOL BOARD NAME] wants for our students.
- We need increased, long-term funding to ensure students get the best possible education with adequate supports. One-time grants simply mean programs are started but not funded long-term.

About inclusive funding:

- [INSERT SCHOOL BOARD NAME] desperately wants to provide the inclusive education our students deserve, but with inadequate funding, we are straining to provide timely intervention, assessments and support for our students with complex needs.
- At [INSERT SCHOOL BOARD NAME], we are one of the 42 out of 61 school boards reporting an inclusive education deficit. In fact, our inclusive education deficit is roughly [INSERT NUMBERS].
- Alberta's current funding model does not address inflation, nor does it

address the diverse needs of today's complex school and student systems.

- [INSERT SCHOOL BOARD NAME] is experiencing challenges meeting the needs of students with specialized needs.
- For example, *[INSERT LOCAL EXAMPLE]*.
- At [INSERT SCHOOL BOARD NAME], we need adequate, long-term, sustainable funding to be able to provide inclusive education programs and services including:
 - Adequate supports for students with complex needs
 - Increased mental health supports
 - Supports for English language learners
 - And supports for FNMI students
 - *[ADD LOCAL CONTEXT IF YOU HAVE ADDITIONAL DETAIL]*
- At [INSERT SCHOOL BOARD NAME], we represent part of the 47 per cent of school boards reporting an FNMI funding shortfall.

About plant operations and maintenance (POM):

- Plant, operations and maintenance funding is tied to enrolment. Schools that experience decreased enrolment still need to maintain and heat their spaces. This issue is especially significant for [INSERT SCHOOL BOARD NAME].
- When POM funding is insufficient, dollars either need to come out of instructional grants just to get by, or it's being supported by our reserves, and reserves are dwindling.
- This creates infrastructure deficits when proper, safe spaces for education are just as important as the education programs themselves.