Greater St. Albert Catholic Schools

March 30, 2020

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update: Parents, Students, Staff

Dear Parents, Students, and Staff:

School superintendents met virtually with Deputy Minister Corbould and the College of Alberta School Superintendents to ask questions about the recent announcement by Minister LaGrange on Saturday, March 28, 2020.

The announcement was as follows:

> *While funding for teachers and most other aspects of the K-12 system is being maintained, funding for transportation and some services not being utilized in an at-home learning environment, such as substitute teachers and educational assistants, is being temporarily reduced while in-person classes remain cancelled. Any savings from these adjustments will be re-allocated to support Alberta's COVID-19 response.*
>
> *These funding adjustments will not negatively impact Alberta's education continuity plan. School authorities will receive the funding they require to continue providing at-home learning opportunities to their students, ensuring they do not fall behind.*
>
> *COVID-19 has changed both how we provide student learning, and the operational needs of the education system. I want to stress that this is a temporary arrangement as schools focus on at-home learning. I have full confidence the system will continue to be equipped to successfully deliver our education continuity plan. Adriana LaGrange, Minister of Education.*

Some questions that we asked and were answered are as follows:

Q: How was the decision made as to a 14% reduction of funding?
A: The ministry estimated funding needed to generate $500M to the government to address the COVID-19 emergency response for medically necessary services. We are now required to determine "non-essential" services for home education and online learning in April, May, and June.

Q: What are "non-essential" services?
A: The ministry anticipated that during online home education, "non-essential services" are likely substitute teachers and educational assistants.

Q: Will boards have the latitude to decide how best to reach the dollar value of the 14% funding cut for April, May, and June?
A: Yes. School boards will determine what is "essential" (absolutely necessary and extremely important services) to meet their educational mandate.

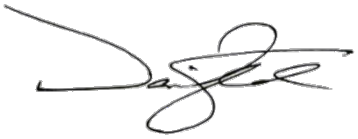
Q: Will this funding reduction for April, May, and June go beyond that timeframe?
A: No. This is a temporary measure to address the COVID-19 emergency funding shortfall.

Q: Why was the timing of the announcement on a Saturday?
A: It was a decision to release it to the public at one time rather than to risk one group knowing before another group.

Q: Will there be a reduction of other funding sources (i.e., Mental Health Capacity Building Grant)?
A: No. Not at this time.

Our Board is working with senior administration to understand the implications of this funding reduction and further details will be forthcoming as soon as we are clear who is impacted. We sincerely appreciate that this new circumstance will create a very difficult time for staff members who are potentially impacted. We ask for your patience as we work together during this unprecedented time of change. We remain committed to supporting the broader societal needs of all Albertans while continuing our commitment to provide students with all of the learning goals previously promised.

Sincerely,



David Keohane, Superintendent of Schools