

Media Release

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Local and Regional Schools Significantly Impacted by Provincial Budget Cuts

St. Albert — Both St. Albert Public Schools and Greater St. Albert Catholic Schools are facing provincial funding cuts, despite steady enrolment trends in St. Albert and regional schools. This loss of funding is even more difficult as it has been announced two months into the current school year, which means immediate adjustments must be made.

While both divisions had prepared for cuts in funding, the government's previous assurances that enrolment growth would be funded had led us to believe the impacts would not be as significant. Calculations following last week's budget announcement indicate, however, that St. Albert's school divisions are now faced with a combined reduction of more than \$5 million. St. Albert Public Schools will see a reduction in funding for this current school year of \$2.9 million. Next year, the reduction will be \$4.6 million. Greater St. Albert Catholic Schools, which includes the communities of St. Albert, Morinville, and Legal, will see a reduction of \$2.5 million this year, and \$3.6 million next year.

"The reduced funding of approximately 4% for the 2019-2020 school year compels our Board to rectify the deficit as soon as possible," comments of Greater St. Albert Catholic Schools' Board Chair Joe Becigneul. "While this announcement will have significant impact on our operations as a division, we hope to address these changes while sustaining optimal resources to support the classroom."

"The bottom line is that our division's enrolment has increased over last year's, while our funding has decreased significantly," says St. Albert Public Schools Board Chair Glenys Edwards. "At a time of continued growth, we have fewer dollars with which to work. As a result of the cuts and the timing, we are now in the position of having to make challenging decisions when we are already well into the school and budget year."

Both divisions are reviewing their budgets closely to determine how to manage these reductions. The reality for both divisions is that our students and families should be prepared for less support in the classroom due to potential increases in class sizes and reduction of staff. Families should also be prepared for the possibility of changes to transportation fees, as a key grant that allowed for free busing for eligible families has been discontinued effective this year, after fee structures had been set months ago and bus passes allocated accordingly. This leaves the school divisions with the difficult decision whether or not to try to recoup those fees from families this year or incur deeper transportation deficits.

Further details from each school division will be shared with their respective students, families, and staff members as decisions on how to address this shortfall are made within the upcoming days.

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