

Blue Ribbon Panel on Alberta's Finances

Key messages:

GENERAL:

- Divisions are waiting to hear what portion of the panel's recommendations will be applied to education.

COSTS OF BOARD AND SYSTEM ADMINISTRATION:

There were two recommendations that were presented in the report as they pertained to K-12 education in Alberta, one of which referred to the cost of administration and governance.

The recommendation suggested a decrease in the percentage of government funding that goes into administration and governance—currently listed at 24.6 per cent—should be enacted.

The actual portion of funding allocated to governance and administration is capped by the Government of Alberta at 3.6 per cent. This includes the following areas, all essential for the efficient and effective operation of a school division:

- Operations for the office of the superintendent
- Central Services staff supporting education
- Staffing and operations for business services, finance, human resources, purchasing, communications, information technology and payroll
- Facility Services (capital project management, planning)
- Insurance and amortization

EIPS comes in well below the cap, at 3.4 per cent of the total budget—and has done so consistently over the years. The 24.6 per cent figure put forward in the report is not consistent with what EIPS spends and submits as part of the requirements put forward by Alberta Education.

FUNDING BASED ON SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

There are a number of factors, which impact the level of performance at any given school.

- programming divisions are able to offer based on numbers of students and size of schools
- number of students facing challenges related to specialized needs
- the socio-economic composition of the community in which the student lives, as well as the individual socioeconomic status of a student's family
- the level of supports available for vulnerable families in the communities served by a division

Schools with a student population which include a higher number of vulnerable students will invariably see their results impacted.

If Alberta Education awards a greater proportion of funding to those schools with a record of higher academic performance, students who truly need extra investment for supports and programming will not receive the funding needed to achieve to the best of their abilities.

Public schools serve diverse populations and it is their role to ensure all students receive a high quality education. To withhold funding on the basis of performance further marginalizes disadvantaged students.

Budget

Key Messages:

- The Government of Alberta will not be handing down its 2019-20 budget until October 24, following the federal election.
- Based on the government's election platform and a commitment to fiscal constraint, EIPS approved a very conservative budget designed to mitigate any financial risks within the Division.
- If when the budget is delivered we receive funds, which exceed totals we anticipated, those dollars will be pushed out to schools to the benefit of students.
- We look forward to receiving the government's budget this fall, and will make necessary adjustments to ensure we continue to fulfill our mandate and vision.

Education Act

Key Messages:

Some important notes include:

- Public school divisions –the change in name applies only to legal documents like cheques and contracts at this point. We've been assured that while the legal name of the Division is now Elk Island School Division, we retain the right to continue using our branded name (Elk Island Public Schools) on buildings, vehicles, advertising, websites, printed materials and so forth.

EIPS is seeking clarity from Alberta Education about whether the branding would need to change to reflect the new legal name in the future—if required, the cost to divisions would be significant.

- GSAs – nothing changes for Elk Island Public Schools. Our school administrators are expected to adhere to Board Policy 19 regarding Welcoming, Caring, Respectful and Safe Learning and Working Environments, and all related administrative procedures. We remain committed to protection and inclusion for all vulnerable and minority individuals in our division.
- Fewer restrictions on school fees—although the Government now allows divisions to charge fees for student transportation, they are only permitted to charge the difference between the actual costs of transportation and the funding we receive from Alberta Education.

EIPS operates on a cost-recovery model only; no profit is being made from transportation fees. As always, the Division has provisions in place to work with families for whom the payment of fees presents a significant economic issue (including payment plans and waivers).