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April 14, 2020

Dear Elk Island Public Schools families,

Today marks the start of the second week of learning since the suspension of in-school classes across Alberta. It will take time for everyone to get used to this temporary education model. So far, we've witnessed a genuine excitement by students to reconnect with their teachers and their schools. As time passes, this new process will smooth out. While it's not the same as having everyone together in the classroom, it's important we maintain these connections and continue student learning.

As the health authorities in our province continue their battle against the spread of COVID-19 and the Government of Alberta provides additional supports to those most in need of assistance, the original budget allocation for education in 2019-20 has been reduced. While the Board is proud of the incredible work done by all Elk Island Public Schools (EIPS) employees in providing a high standard of education to students, we also understand the current financial pressures on the government to balance the needs of all citizens during a time of crisis.

In the fall, when the 2019-20 budget was released, EIPS' Board of Trustees opted to use its reserves to maintain staffing levels, and in so doing, minimize any disruption to classroom learning mid-year. With reserves now below the recommended threshold, we're unable to draw additional funds to cover the subsequent decrease announced a few weeks ago.

Until we find ourselves on the other side of the pandemic and it's safe to return to school again, EIPS needs to restructure its operations. Regrettably, this means a reduction in some staff at both the central administration and school levels. The decisions about what positions were critical in this troubling time were incredibly difficult and absolutely do not reflect on the valuable contributions of those temporarily laid off.

Moving forward, EIPS' educational leaders, administrators, teachers and staff will use the resources available to the Division to continue to provide the best possible educational experience to students in the days ahead. Everyday remote learning will not look or feel the same as what can be delivered within the walls of our classrooms, but our commitment to you and your child remains every bit as strong. We will get through this together and are all looking forward to the day when we can welcome students and staff back to our schools.

We hope you all remain safe and in good health.

Sincerely,



Trina Boymook, Board Chair
Trustee, Sherwood Park



Heather Wall, Board Vice-Chair
Trustee, Fort Saskatchewan



Randy Footz
Trustee, Vegreville & Co. of Minburn



W.H. (Skip) Gordon
Trustee, Rural Strathcona County



Colleen Holowaychuk
Trustee, Lamont County



Annette Hubick
Trustee, Sherwood Park



Don Irwin
Trustee, Sherwood Park



Jim Seutter
Trustee, Rural Strathcona County



Harvey Stadnick
Trustee, Fort Saskatchewan