



August 4, 2023

The Honourable Demetrios Nicolaidis
Minister of Education
Government of Alberta
228 Legislature Building
10800 - 97 Avenue NW
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Dear Minister Nicolaidis,

On behalf of the Elk Island Public Schools (EIPS) Board of Trustees, I'm writing regarding the mandate letter provided to you by Premier Smith, and to discuss its close alignment with work already being undertaken within our division. Specifically, I'm referring to funding the growth of "CAREERS" with public and separate school divisions to increase student participation in off-campus or paid internships; enhancing dual credit grant programs; and investing in promoting career pathways."

This past spring, EIPS submitted a Collegiate School Status Initial Proof of Concept application to Alberta Education which proposed a collegiate education model for a potential junior high/senior high replacement school in Fort Saskatchewan that would include partnerships with Alberta Education, Alberta Advanced Education and local industry organizations—with whom we already have strong working relationships. The concept: providing leading-edge space and programming to better assist students in preparing for careers, employment, apprenticeships, and post-secondary education. The proximity to Alberta's Industrial Heartland, and the collaborative partnerships we have already established with groups like Agrium Inc., Dow Chemical, Shell Scotford, and Sherritt International, would help propel students towards careers that would continue benefiting the community and meet the needs of industries that drive the provincial economy.

I have attached a condensed version of the proposal for quick reference, but I want to highlight some aspects of the proposed Elk Island-Heartland Collegiate School and the opportunity it represents not just for students but for employers in the Heartland region—which is predicted to attract more than \$30 billion of new industrial growth in the next seven years.

We envision a Grade 7 to 12 facility which would provide fulsome applied learning experiences in Career and Technology Studies (CTS) and Career and Technology Foundations (CTF), as well as off-campus education, dual credit and learning pathways which lead directly into careers or specialized post-secondary streams—and ultimately help address the looming shortage so many organizations face in the coming years due to an aging workforce.

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The Elk Island-Heartland Collegiate School would take a collaborative approach to programming and would rely on an advisory committee which includes government, industry and post-secondary members to ensure student growth opportunities are representative of evolving sectors in Alberta including childcare, healthcare, and natural resources. Students enrolled in the school would still meet graduation requirements, while also enrolling in collegiate-level programs that provide a valuable head-start within their chosen fields.

Even before the possibility of a collegiate model was raised by the Alberta Government, EIPS had already established its own Career Pathways initiative and established strong partnerships with both corporations and post-secondary institutions. For example, through a partnership with Northern Lakes College, and both Shell Canada and Nutrien, students have completed power-engineering courses and internships that give them a fourth-class power engineering certificate when they complete Grade 12. Those who have taken advantage of the program have up to three years' experience to offer employers immediately upon graduation—and can contribute immediately towards the province's economic prosperity.

EIPS has the educational expertise, the industrial connections, the post-secondary support, community demand, and a concrete strategic plan for a successful collegiate school. What we need to make it a reality is fiscal resources and a leading-edge facility that can accommodate student growth; house modern labs and innovative classrooms; provide knowledgeable instructors and state-of-the art equipment.

As it stands now, EIPS is experiencing an educational infrastructure crisis in Fort Saskatchewan. Not only has the growth of the community—largely driven by resource-based development—exceeded space in our schools, but the Division is also challenged by the age-related condition of both junior and senior high facilities in the city.

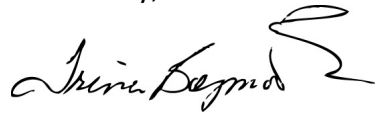
The lack of space significantly impacts student learning and community cohesiveness. At both Rudolph Hennig Junior High and Fort Saskatchewan High, the aged infrastructure, maintenance issues and building capacity have affected the programming the Division is able to offer students. Career and Technology Foundations and Studies, which provide critical apprenticeship level instruction in trades like automotive or fabrication, are not available to students. This creates inequity among our schools and puts Fort Saskatchewan students at a disadvantage when pursuing career opportunities.

Should Alberta Education and Alberta Continuing Education choose to support EIPS' vision for the Elk Island-Heartland Collegiate School, the Division would be able to build a junior/senior high that would not only relieve enrolment pressures within Fort Saskatchewan and provide high-quality learning environments, but also improve the career prospects for all students throughout the region and help support those sectors desperate for skilled labour.

Again, what we are seeking to achieve aligns very closely with many aspects of your mandate letter, Minister Nicolaides. I would very much appreciate an opportunity to meet with you—along with some of our industry partners and supporters—to discuss EIPS' strategy and how it can help support the Government of Alberta's education and economic goals now and in the years ahead. I know the legislature doesn't resume sitting until the end of October, so perhaps a day earlier that month might be a suitable time for you. Your office can reach me at trina.boymook@eips.ca or on my cell phone at (780) 920-3309 to share what dates you may be available.

Thank you for your kind consideration. We are very excited about the possibilities this initiative can provide young Albertans going forward.

Yours truly,



Trina Boymook, Chair
Elk Island Public Schools

TB:lm

Att

CC: Hon. Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk, Parliamentary Secretary for Settlement Services and Ukrainian Evacuees and MLA for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville