



Premier of Alberta

Office of the Premier, 307 Legislature Building, Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2B6 Canada

July 25, 2023

The Honourable Demetrios Nicolaidis
Minister of Education

Dear Minister:

I want to thank you for your service to this government and congratulate you on your new role as Minister of Education.

Our Cabinet is made up of talented, diverse, and experienced leaders and I am proud to share with you our responsibility to fulfill the mandate given to us by Albertans. We all love this beautiful province and want the best for our families and our future. Over the next four years, we will take clear and decisive action to grow and diversify our economy while ensuring our health, education and other core social programs are world class.

I have full confidence that our team will build on our solid foundation of stability, informed decision-making, and good governance to improve the lives of Albertans and help our province realize its potential.

Ensuring our children receive a world-class education is a top priority and focus of our government. Alberta's economy is creating tens of thousands of jobs in the modern economy, yet we are not doing enough to encourage Alberta students to pursue career paths with the most plentiful and lucrative employment opportunities. This is both hurting students and exacerbating our provincial labour shortage. We must do a better job of equipping Alberta's youth with the skills and direction they need to find meaningful employment in the economy we are building.

Part of achieving this objective is to promote greater choice in education. Expanding parent and student options in our public, separate, francophone, charter, independent (private), early childhood and home education systems will ensure parents have a host of tailored options for their children's education that best suit the needs of their individual students.

And importantly, as we grow new opportunities for students, we must address the growing needs of students with mental health and other learning challenges. These children must be provided with every opportunity to flourish in our education system and economy. We need them to be successful, fulfilled and fully participative in building our province.

Under your leadership as Minister of Education, I expect you to work closely with your Cabinet and Caucus colleagues and the public service through the committee, Cabinet, and legislative processes to deliver on our platform commitments to support Albertans, including:

- Working in cooperation with the Minister of Advanced Education, fund growth of "CAREERS" with public and separate school divisions to increase student participation in off-campus programs or paid internships.



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- Enhancing dual credit grant programs to make more funding available for new dual credit programming and equipment.
- Continuing to bring more collegiate schools online across the province to create pathways for students to post-secondary or their chosen fields in the workforce.
- In collaboration with the Minister of Advanced Education, reviewing the *Skills for Jobs Task Force Report*, and advancing key recommendations from the report pertaining to your ministry, including the design and implementation of an apprenticeship system (similar to the Germanic model) for high school age students interested in pursuing vocational education and training in the skilled trades.
- Investing \$20 million over 4 years in promoting career pathways including:
 - Organizing career fairs for high school students in high demand sectors.
 - Establishing an online career counselling website for students and parents to assist with career and education road mapping.
 - Launching a high school targeted advertising campaign to promote high demand careers.
 - Developing more teacher training for career and technology studies.
 - Collaborating with the Minister of Advanced Education to develop and promote career educational scholarships in areas of labour shortage for Alberta's K-12 students.
 - Funding additional mobile CTS and CTF labs

In addition, I expect you to deliver on further initiatives overseen by your ministry including:

- As lead, working with the Minister of Seniors, Community, and Social Services to invest \$5 million to improve testing and educational supports for children with complex needs including children with autism.
- Collaborating with the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction, who is the lead, to expand access to young people struggling with severe mental illness to construct four new youth mental wellness centres to provide inpatient mental health and addiction treatment to youth while expanding prevention and early intervention mental health support for children and youth that are integrated within schools and communities.
- Reviewing the role of parent school councils and working with educators to explore ways parents can appropriately provide more input into school policies and learning options.
- Ensuring Alberta's educational funding model continues to promote parental choice in education. This includes ensuring that Alberta's public, separate, francophone, charter,



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independent (private) schools and early childhood services operators and home education systems are all appropriately funded to ensure the highest educational outcomes for students.

- Working to significantly increase the number of schools in the communities of greatest need.
- Making recommendations on the best way to create an expedited teaching certificate to fast-track instructors of skilled trades and other professions into teaching positions in junior high and high schools.
- Exploring incentives to support the recruitment and retention of teachers, educational assistants and support staff in underserved areas of the province.
- Continuing to implement additional educational assistants in our classrooms to address learning loss and the increasing complexity of learning needs.
- Evaluating and, if needed, expanding supports for qualified professionals, such as speech language pathologists, physical therapists, occupational therapists, and psychologists.
- Reviewing and strengthening Program Unit Funding (PUF) to ensure programming and funding are addressing the educational needs of children with severe disabilities or delay.
- Working collaboratively with parents, teachers, and stakeholders to continue to implement K to12 curriculum, and implement additional basic life and home maintenance skills as well as financial literacy training into the high school curriculum where appropriate.
- Assisting each ministry to execute on their mandate to design a ministry-specific job-attraction strategy that raises awareness for young Albertans, especially those in grades 9-12, and adults changing careers of the skilled trades and professions available in each economic sector including pathways for education, apprenticeship, and training.

I direct you to work closely with the public service, including your Deputy Minister and other senior officials in your ministry, to support the priorities outlined in this letter with the highest standard of professionalism, integrity, and creativity.

I also expect you to regularly and proactively reach out to all ministry-related stakeholders in order to take feedback and identify potential solutions on issues of importance to them, including finding ways our government can reduce burdensome and unnecessary red tape and barriers that are hurting their members' ability to grow the economy and improve quality of life for the Albertans they serve.



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Together with you and our Caucus and Cabinet colleagues, I look forward to serving all Albertans to ensure our province remains one of the best places on earth to live, work and raise a family.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Danielle Smith". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D'.

Danielle Smith

Premier of Alberta