

ELECT PUBLIC EDUCATION



2023 ALBERTA ELECTION VOTER TOOLKIT

**ON MAY 29, VOTE TO DEFEND EVERY CHILD'S RIGHT TO ACCESS
HIGH QUALITY, BARRIER-FREE PUBLIC EDUCATION**



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SOS K-12 Education Platform

- 01** STOP EDUCATION PRIVATIZATION
- 02** RESTORE & AUGMENT PUBLIC SCHOOL FUNDING
- 03** DITCH DISASTROUS NEW CURRICULUM
- 04** REMOVE STUDENT BARRIERS TO ACCESS EDUCATION
- 05** PRIORITIZE & SUPPORT COMMUNITY SCHOOLS



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Background

In the past 4 years, Alberta's public education system has been heavily attacked by a hostile provincial government. With frozen education budgets each year, resources have not kept up with historic inflation and increased student enrolment. Grant cuts have caused classes to balloon to untenable sizes & complexities. Safety measures and programs were even withheld from students during a global health crisis.

This has been deliberate.

Under the guise of the harmful ideological "school choice" rhetoric, hundreds of millions of dollars in public funding have been diverted to private and charter school expansion.

➤➤➤ **Public education remains our best vehicle for achieving social equity.**

The privatization playbook is being accelerated in education just like in health care. The gaps in our public education system are directly caused by decades of chronic underfunding and austerity policies sold under the myth that we cannot afford for every child to have comprehensive, free, well-rounded public education right in their own communities. We can't accept this lie.

Public education is our best chance at generating societal cohesion and preparing children for active democratic engagement so we can collectively solve multiple overlapping societal crises.

But it needs to be bolstered and actively protected this provincial election.

Use this toolkit to question your candidates. Talk to your friends and school/parent communities about making public education a key election issue on May 29.



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01. STOP EDUCATION PRIVATIZATION



Defund private schools



To candidate:

Will you commit to eliminating public subsidies to private schools and redirecting these funds back to public education?

Alberta currently publicly subsidizes private education at 70% of the public per-student instruction grant. This is among the highest rates in the nation while some provinces don't even subsidize private schools at all. Further, private schools can charge an unlimited amount of tuition and are typically attended by the affluent who do not need these public dollars. The Alberta government is using public funds to underwrite exclusive education while underfunding public schools which educate students of all socioeconomic status. In effect, private school subsidies are taking from marginalized students and community schools which direly need these funds. This is highly inequitable policy that needs to be rolled back.



Absorb charter schools into public boards



To candidate:

Will you commit to ending the charter school 'experiment' since they are private schools in disguise?

Charter schools are privately managed outfits which receive full public financial backing but are not governed by publicly elected boards. They are independent schools that can exclude students based on arbitrary factors. They do not serve the communities at large but are hotbeds of privatization. Alberta is the only province to legislate charter schools since 1994 but with little to no accountability or reporting on their effectiveness in serving the Alberta student population. Recent government numbers revealed that funding for charter schools is slated to increase by 18.6% compared to a slight 6.83% bump for public schools.

Source: <https://pressprogress.ca/new-data-shows-danielle-smiths-education-plan-benefits-wealthiest-socioeconomic-households/>



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02. RESTORE & AUGMENT PUBLIC SCHOOL FUNDING



Fix the weighted-moving-average formula to stop penalizing growing schools



To candidate:

Will you commit to reconstruct the funding formula so every public school student is funded equitably?

The Alberta government changed the funding formula to a weighted-moving-average calculated over three years' enrolment. However, this has resulted in punishing growing school districts as new students remain unfunded. The province needs to adopt a better estimate of funding provision that ensures each student receives what they need and that schools as a whole are funded to educate all students adequately..



Increase overall school funding to surpass national average



To candidate:

Will you commit to restoring the \$1.2B deficit/year in education funding that puts Alberta dead last in per-student spending in the nation?

Statistics Canada data shows that despite being a wealthy province, Alberta spends the lowest amount per student in all of Canada. It is unacceptable that Alberta students are receiving fewer resources than their peers in the rest of the country. This funding gap needs to be closed in order to hire and pay education workers to teach and support all students in public schools and reduce ballooning class sizes.

Source: <https://calgary.ctvnews.ca/students-teachers-and-schools-deserve-better-alberta-teachers-calls-for-education-funding-increase-1.6290619>



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03. DITCH DISASTROUS NEW CURRICULUM



Abolish current draft and return curriculum development process to non-partisan curriculum experts



To candidate:

Will you commit to halting the rushed implementation of the 2021 Draft curriculum and reconvene education experts to develop an inclusive, modernized curriculum?

The 2021 Draft Curriculum was developed with extreme partisan influence and excluded educational curricular experts. The glaring problems in the curriculum have been highly publicized and critiqued from diverse groups such as teachers, parents, scholars, community members, Indigenous groups, and equity-seeking groups. The content-laden, age-inappropriate, and rote memorization dependent aspects are worsened by the Eurocentric, colonial overtones that undermine Alberta's commitment to Truth & Reconciliation.

04. REMOVE STUDENT BARRIERS TO ACCESS



Regulate school fees and restore grants that support students with complex needs and other marginalized groups



To candidate:

Will you commit to stop downloading added costs to families to access educational programming? Will you restore PUF grants and re-fund wraparound services for complex needs students?

Public education access has become fragmented through added financial, geographical, and ability barriers. In an affordability crisis, families should not be bombarded with rising private costs like transportation, lunch supervision, and program fees for basic educational services. Complex needs students have lost supports through PUF grants that were previously funding educational supports like EAs, occupational, and speech therapists.



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05. PRIORITIZE & SUPPORT COMMUNITY SCHOOLS


 **Fund school modernization and infrastructure upgrades for healthy and clean learning environments**

 **To candidate:**

Will you commit targeted funding to improve the regular maintenance and modernization of outdated school buildings?

Through decades of chronic underfunding, many public schools in Alberta are in major need of building modernization. The pandemic showed us that air quality and HVAC systems were outdated. Many school classrooms don't even have windows or poorly circulated portables.

 **Introduce flexible utilization rates to keep community schools open so students can attend within their neighbourhood**

 **To candidate:**

Will you re-commit to advancing the community public school ideal by ensuring students don't need to travel unreasonable distances?

Public schools should serve as community hubs but they are under threat from charter and private schools entering the neighbourhood and changing the student landscape. Restrictive utilization rates and lagging modernization push schools to the edge of operations and leave families with no local alternatives. Public education hinges on local students being educated together in proximity to create social cohesion, community wellbeing, and social integration. The next provincial government needs to understand that restoring the community public school model requires accountability and flexibility while protecting public schools from having their student population siphoned to alternative independent institutions.



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Take action!

Public education is at stake this election.

As an engaged voter, we need you to activate and raise these important concerns with candidates, your neighbours, your parent council/school community circles.

Public education is a public good that impacts us all and advocacy is not limited to parents, students, or teachers.

A thriving public education system is a cornerstone of a healthy democracy.

-  Ask candidates to take a firm position on public education
-  Share information in this toolkit with your school council
-  Email these priorities to all candidates in your riding
-  Attend town-halls or forums and demand commitments
-  Make a presentation at your community league meeting
-  Hold elected officials accountable post-election



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