

# { EDUCATION }

## The Current Situation

Alberta's K-12 education system continues to suffer from a combination of increased expectations and inadequate resources. For years, unstable, unpredictable, and inadequate funding has led to larger and larger class sizes. The PC government's final provincial budget in 2015 planned not to fund the projected enrolment growth of 12,000 students.

While classrooms across the province are growing increasingly complex, supports are not keeping up with those needs. In fact, research by the provincially-funded Early Child Development Mapping Project ([www.ecmap.ca](http://www.ecmap.ca)) shows that Alberta children are already behind in their development before they begin kindergarten. The number of English language learners is also increasing without sufficient support.

Since the 2015 election, the new Alberta government has fulfilled some of its promises to improve the province's education system, including fully funding student enrolment growth, building new schools, introducing a school nutrition program, and reducing mandatory school fees.

The province's Early Learning and Child Care Centres pilot project that are funding several non-profit programs was also a significant step in the right direction, in prioritizing the development of children in their early years (0-5).

At the same time, some of the government's campaign platform promises remain unfulfilled: reducing class sizes, increasing supports to respond to the increasing complexity of classrooms, and phasing in all-day kindergarten.

At the same time, the provincial government continues to provide a substantial amount of unnecessary funding to private schools, totalling more than \$100 million per year, excluding special needs schools. That money would be better spent strengthening our Public, Catholic, and Francophone school systems.



## **Priorities for Advancing the Public Interest**

The Vision: A fair and just Alberta for all requires strengthening our K-12 education system so that every child in the province has a fair start.

The Government of Alberta should prioritize changes in the following areas to ensure we develop the full potential of every child:

### **1. Strengthen our public and separate school systems**

- Immediately implement the campaign platform promise to reduce class sizes
- Develop province-wide class size maximums and fund school boards to meet them
- Increase supports in classrooms to respond to increasingly complex needs

### **2. Enhance equity in education**

- Phase out public funding of private schools and reallocate that funding to needs in the Public, Catholic, and Francophone school systems
- End the charter schools experiment by turning them into private schools or integrating them into public school systems

### **3. Prioritize authentic and meaningful learning**

- Reform provincial assessment and evaluation practises to focus on more meaningful outcomes of learning
- Ensure curriculum is designed to develop well-rounded citizens and includes arts, languages, and social sciences as priorities alongside science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)
- Respect the professionalism of teachers as those best positioned to assess student progress and needs

### **4. Prioritize investments in early learning**

- Expand the pilot project for Alberta's Early Learning and Child Care Centres toward a universal system of early learning and care
- Phase in all-day kindergarten to make it available to all Alberta children