

The Metro School Boards Group



Calgary Board
of Education



CALGARY CATHOLIC
SCHOOL DISTRICT



EDMONTON
CATHOLIC SCHOOLS



EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

June 22, 2022

Honourable Adriana LaGrange
Minister of Education
228 Legislature Building
10800-97 Ave
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Honourable Prasad Panda
Minister of Transportation
127 Legislature Building
10800-97 Ave
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Dear Ministers LaGrange and Panda,

Thank you for meeting with the metro boards on April 25, 2022. We appreciate the opportunity to provide the metro school jurisdictions' perspective on private/public partnerships (P3) model for new school builds. All four metro school jurisdictions are expecting continued growth and new student spaces remain a significant need in many communities in both Edmonton and Calgary.

Our jurisdictions have experience with the P3 model and we understand the Provincial perspective on this delivery model. We appreciate that budget certainty, risk transfer and schedule protection are important considerations for deciding how to bring schools to our communities.

Our combined experience related to the existing P3 schools, however, has been a challenge for our divisions. During the design and construction phases of the ASAP I & II programs, the building designs were fixed and our divisions lost the ability to incorporate community or programmatic feedback into the design. Divisions were unable to influence the design of the building or the building systems. This created inconsistency between our P3 schools and the other schools in our divisions. In short, P3 schools struggle to remain flexible and responsive to evolving student learning needs. Examples where P3 schools experience challenges in student and community accommodation include:

- Building modifications face extended timelines, have seen costs as much as 10 times above an anticipated standard and jurisdictions are asked to pay for the anticipated impact on future maintenance that changes are anticipated to result in. This 20- or 25-year expense does not align with our annual 'single-year' funding model.
- A particular challenge can be seen with the costs and timelines associated with student growth accommodation and changes to programming needs, where efforts such as the fit-up of special needs classrooms or the addition of portables are not feasible.

The divisions are also challenged by the necessity to provide staff to manage the P3 contract for our respective divisions at a disproportionately higher level than our division-operated sites. Combined with the costs of ongoing and potential future litigation, the financial obligation associated with P3 schools can be significant, and may not be not accounted for in Provincial numbers.

We acknowledge that the newest P3 project currently under construction is notably different from the previous ASAP projects. Our concerns around the need to have the design reflect our communities was heard by Infrastructure staff in the creation of unique floor plans for each site. We also appreciate the opportunity to provide

feedback around both the DBFM and the Tri-Party agreement. However, while these changes are encouraging, our divisions have experienced more success when building school infrastructure using alternative methods of procurement. Our divisions are also looking to build schools that meet the needs of the greater community, such as through partnerships with our local municipalities. We are open to collaborating with Alberta Infrastructure to build new schools for us that incorporate compatible uses sponsored by the municipality. An example of a successful partnership in new construction would be Dr. Anne Anderson High School in Edmonton. This school provides recreation facilities to the larger community, while enhancing the infrastructure offered to our students. A partnership such as this would be difficult under a P3 model, and represents a missed opportunity for efficiency.

Our divisions are requesting that the Province allow the metro jurisdictions to determine the best procurement strategy for new school and modernization projects. We understand, however, the budgetary pressures and the government's platform commitment to P3 projects. Therefore, if the P3 model is a must, then our preference would be to remove the Operation and Maintenance portion of the contract, or significantly reduce the term as much as possible. Some of the things we discussed going forward that our divisions would appreciate are:

- Being able to meet the day-to-day learning needs of staff and students (i.e., increased agility)
- Reduced red-tape and associated timeframes
- Increased school board authority to deal directly with the P3 operator

We would like to thank you again for the opportunity to provide feedback and recommendations for our future school infrastructure. Should you have any questions or would like to discuss further, please do not hesitate to contact any of the signatories below.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



Trisha Estabrooks
Chair, Board of Trustees
Edmonton Public Schools



Cathie Williams
Chair, Board of Trustees
Calgary Catholic School District



Laura Hack
Chair, Board of Trustees
Calgary Board of Education



Sandra Palazzo
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- c. Honourable Nicholas Milliken, Minister of Infrastructure
Darrel Robertson, Superintendent, Edmonton Public Schools
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