

**DATE:** April 27, 2021

**TO:** Board of Trustees

**FROM:** Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools

**SUBJECT:** Criteria the Province Uses to Allocate New Schools, Modernizations and Portables (Response to Request for Information #098)

**ORIGINATOR:** Kathy Muhlethaler, Assistant Superintendent

**RESOURCE STAFF:** Roland Labbe, Jennifer Thompson, Christopher Wright

**REFERENCE:** [Alberta School Capital Manual](#)  
[School and Authority Student Population Data](#)

---

**ISSUE**

At the March 23, 2021, Board meeting, Trustee Janz noted that capital projects announced by the Government of Alberta on March 10, 2021 excluded new school projects for Calgary Public Schools and Edmonton Public Schools, the two largest school divisions and among the fastest growing in the province. Trustee Janz requested the following information:

1. Provide the criteria by which the province allocates new schools, modernizations or portables.
2. Of the fourteen divisions who were awarded projects, do any of the recipients have a faster enrolment growth over the last four years (covering the school years ended August 31, 2017 to August 31, 2020), compared to Edmonton Public Schools?

**BACKGROUND**

On March 10, 2021, the Government of Alberta announced funding approval of six new school projects and three replacement school projects across the province (Attachment I). No new school projects for Edmonton Public Schools or the Calgary Board of Education were included as part of this announcement.

**CURRENT SITUATION**

Alberta Education reviews and prioritizes the Division's school capital projects among all school divisions in the province in accordance with their criteria, as listed in the *Alberta School Capital Manual, March 2015*: health and safety, building condition, utilization rates, enrolment projections, education program delivery and impact, site readiness, infrastructure performance, and partnership opportunities (Appendix I). These criteria apply to funding decisions related to new construction, modernizations and modular classroom approvals. Capital funding requests are submitted annually by all school jurisdictions across the province to Alberta Education. They are then ranked by Alberta Education, submitted to the Government of Alberta's Capital Planning Process (coordinated by Alberta Infrastructure), and then forwarded to Treasury Board and Caucus for funding approval consideration.

A review of school jurisdiction enrolment growth in Alberta from the 2016-2017 school year through to the current 2020-2021 school year indicates that Edmonton Public Schools had the highest enrolment growth for the period, gaining 7,791 students. This was followed by the Calgary Board of Education (3,658), Elk Island Catholic Schools (2,997), Rocky View SD (2,686), Edmonton Catholic Schools (2,127), Calgary Catholic Schools (1,493), Golden Hills SD (1,343), Fort McMurray Public Schools (1,208), Black Gold SD (1,130), and Prairie Land SD (1,087). This data was obtained from *School and Authority Student Population Data* posted on the Province of Alberta website.

## KEY POINTS

- Alberta Education criteria for school project funding decisions, as listed in the *Alberta School Capital Manual, March 2015*, are based on health and safety, building condition, utilization rates, enrolment projections, education program delivery and impact, site readiness and infrastructure performance.
- Edmonton Public Schools had the highest enrolment growth over the past five years, gaining 7,791 students, followed by the Calgary Board of Education gaining 3,658 students.

## ATTACHMENTS and APPENDICES

Attachment I - March 10, 2021 School Capital Project Announcement List

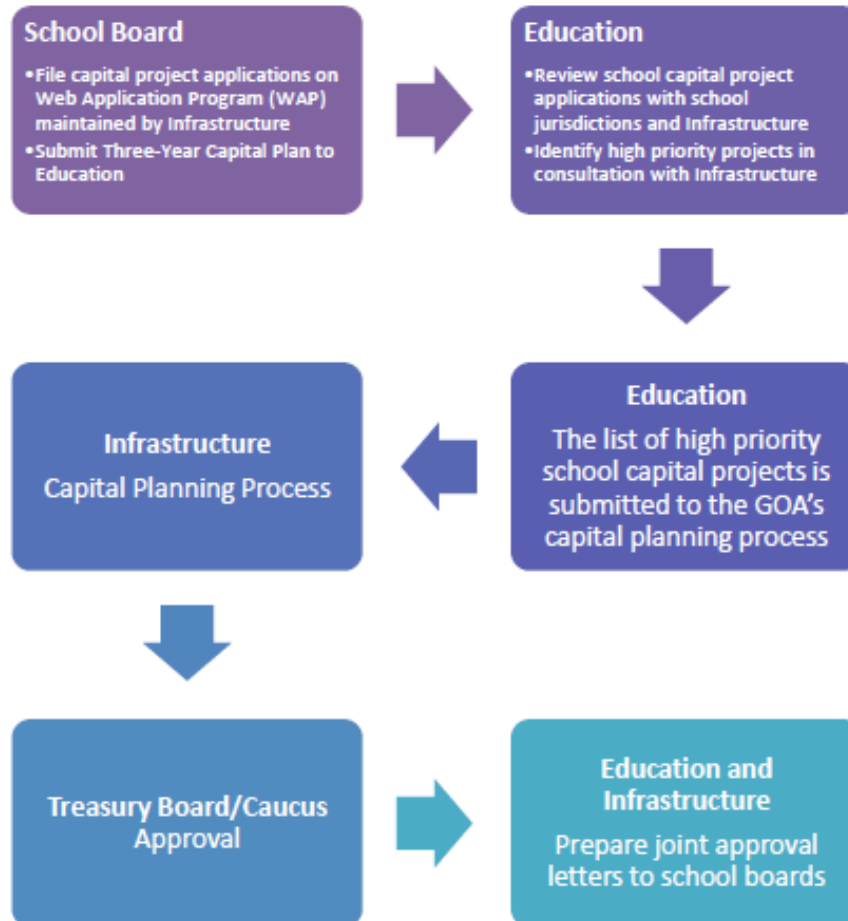
Appendix I - Alberta School Capital Manual, March 2015 (Section 4.0)

RL:kk

Community	School Division	Project Type	Project Name
Calgary	Southern Francophone Education Region	New Complex in South Calgary	(Grades K-6/7-12)
Camrose	Elk Island Catholic Separate School Division	New High School	(Grades 9-12)
Edmonton	Edmonton Catholic Separate School Division	New High School	Castle Downs/Dunluce (Grades 10-12)
Lethbridge	Lethbridge School Division	New Elementary School	West Lethbridge (Grades K-5)
Manning	Peace River School Division	New school	(Grades K-12)
Red Deer	Red Deer Catholic Separate School Division	New Middle School	(Grades 6-9)
Calgary	Foundations for the Future Charter Academy	Replacement School	Funding to support a site solution for Foundations for the Future Charter Academy on the Montgomery School site
Coaldale	Palliser School Division	Replacement and Reconfiguration	Kate Andrews High School
Sherwood Park	Greater North Central Francophone Education Region	Replacement and Expansion	École Claudette-et-Denis-Tardif School

#### 4. Approval Process for School Building Projects

As required by the School Act, Part 7, Division 2, ministerial approval must be obtained before a school jurisdiction can begin work on any capital project. There will be no funding provided to a jurisdiction for a project that has been started without prior written ministerial approval.



## 4.1 School Capital Funding Priorities

School capital projects are reviewed and prioritized by Education, with technical input from Infrastructure, prior to being submitted to the government's capital planning process led by Infrastructure.

The projects identified in the Three-Year Capital Plans should include sufficient information to support the jurisdictions' priority ranking. Projects are first reviewed for accuracy and clarity, and staff from Education's Capital Planning Sector and Infrastructure's Learning Facilities Branch may meet with school jurisdictions to obtain further information as required.

Partnerships have become an important component of the capital planning submission. Please see section 3.3 for partnership considerations.

Education then prioritizes project requests by first considering school jurisdiction priorities and then the following criteria:

**Health and Safety** – Impact on health and safety of occupants of not proceeding with the project (e.g., replacement or essential modernization to correct unsafe conditions or prevent a major building failure).

**Building Condition** – Facility audit scores and the facility condition evaluation is a key tool for government and school boards' long-term capital planning processes. It assists with determining priorities for investing in maintenance, upgrades and new infrastructure. Reviews are ongoing within a five-year cycle so that each school is re-evaluated five years following its last review. The evaluation report generated from each review provides a "snapshot" of the physical condition and building systems at that specific point in time. The review anticipates the amount and cost of maintenance work that may be required over the next five years to keep the school in good condition.

**Utilization Rates** – The utilization formula is used as a measure of the relative occupancy levels of a school. When a facility reaches or exceeds a utilization of 85 per cent this indicates that a capital expansion may be considered. See section 9.3 for more information on the utilization formula. A high utilization rate at a school will not automatically result in the approval of additional infrastructure. Demographic trends, total utilization of the area, funding considerations and overall provincial priorities also need to be taken into consideration, along with the relative priorities for school capital projects identified by each of the school jurisdictions in their Three-Year Capital Plans.

**Enrolment Projections** – Trends and subsequent school board plans for the accommodation of students.

**Education Program Delivery and Impact** – Alignment with the direction the board has described in the Three-Year Education Plan and the importance of the project to achieving ministry program delivery requirements.

**Site Readiness** – An appropriately sized site that is serviced and has appropriate access should be available.

Infrastructure Performance – Recognition of infrastructure that is generally in greater need of attention due to poor functionality or poor physical condition; or that high utilization results in the need to adjust program delivery capacity.

Additional Information, including opportunities for partnership/collaborations between one or more school jurisdictions and/or other partners and other supplementary information such as studies, regional plans.

Education then prepares the annual submission for the provincial Capital Planning Prioritization Process.

#### **4.2 Approval of Projects**

Education and Infrastructure will send a letter to the school jurisdictions, notifying them of their approved school building projects and approved funding.