



BOARD OF TRUSTEES BRIEFING TO MLAs

January - February 2025

Briefing Note for:

MLA for Highwood, RJ Sigurdson, Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation

MLA for Livingstone-Macleod, Chelsae Petrovic

MLA for Banff-Kananaskis, Sara Elmeligi

Purpose

To provide concise, reliable, and accurate information to assist the Honorable Minister and Foothills School Division MLAs in their advocacy for their constituents and for the Foothills School Division.

At Issue: *Expanding 'public' Charter School dilutes Choice in Education*

Summary

On February 12, 2025, the Foothills School Division received notification of a Charter School application in the Calgary-area. The application states:

The Academy of Business Literacy and Entrepreneurship would be located in Calgary AB, beginning in the 2025/26 school year. The public charter school intends to offer Grades 7-12 programming with a focus on empowering students to excel in diverse career pathways. The proposed charter school would promote academic excellence, creative problem solving and hands-on, real world learning within the framework of foundational business knowledge.

Foothills School Division will be submitting a letter in opposition to this Charter School application for the following reasons:

- **Lack of Innovation:** The proposed charter school's programming—focused on academic excellence, career pathways, creative problem-solving, and hands-on learning—does not present a truly innovative or enhanced approach as required by the Government of Alberta's [Purpose of public charter schools](#). Public charter schools must offer educational services that are meaningfully different from what is already available locally and demonstrate the potential to improve student learning. The proposed program – as described - does not meet this threshold, as similar opportunities already exist within the public system.
- **Funding Pressures:** Despite annual increases in Alberta's education funding, public tax dollars are increasingly stretched as more charter and private schools compete for the same funding as public schools.
- **Selective Enrollment:** In spite of receiving full government funding, like public schools, charter schools are not required to accept all students—they can refuse enrollment due to space or resource limitations or refuse students who do not fit the criteria described in the charter.

Considerations - [Establishing a Public Charter School Checklist](#)

At Issue: *Public Funding does not equal public education*

Summary

Minister of Education, Demetrios Nicolaides's [Mandate Letter](#) states "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." Unfortunately, funding has not expanded to accommodate all these 'new' education offerings.

Quick Facts

Funding

- Public Schools and Charter Schools received 100% funding from the Government of Alberta and cannot charge tuition fees.
- Accredited Private (Independent) Schools received 70% public funding from the Government of Alberta and have complete autonomy to set tuition fee amounts.

Public Accountability

- Public Schools and Charter Schools must make their audited financial statements publicly available; Private (Independent) Schools do not have the same requirement in spite of receiving public funding.
- Public School Authorities are governed by democratically elected school board trustees. Charter Schools and Private (Independent) Schools are not – in spite of receiving public funding.
- Budget 2024 introduced capital funding and transportation funding for Private (Independent) Schools – public dollars to build private schools and to transport only those students who have been approved for enrollment at the private school.

Enrollment Eligibility

- Public Schools accept all students – regardless of limitations in space and resources.
- Charter Schools are not obligated to enrol every student who seeks admission if there is limited space, resources, or the students do not meet the criteria of the Charter.
- Private (Independent) School have full autonomy to decide who attends their school.

Considerations

- Expanding the number of charter and independent (private) schools draws more and more students out of the public school system. As each student leaves, so does their allocated per/student funding.
- Any reduction in the number of students in the public system directly results in a reduction in the number of staff, impacting programming.
- The most complex – and most expensive – students to educate are in the public school system.

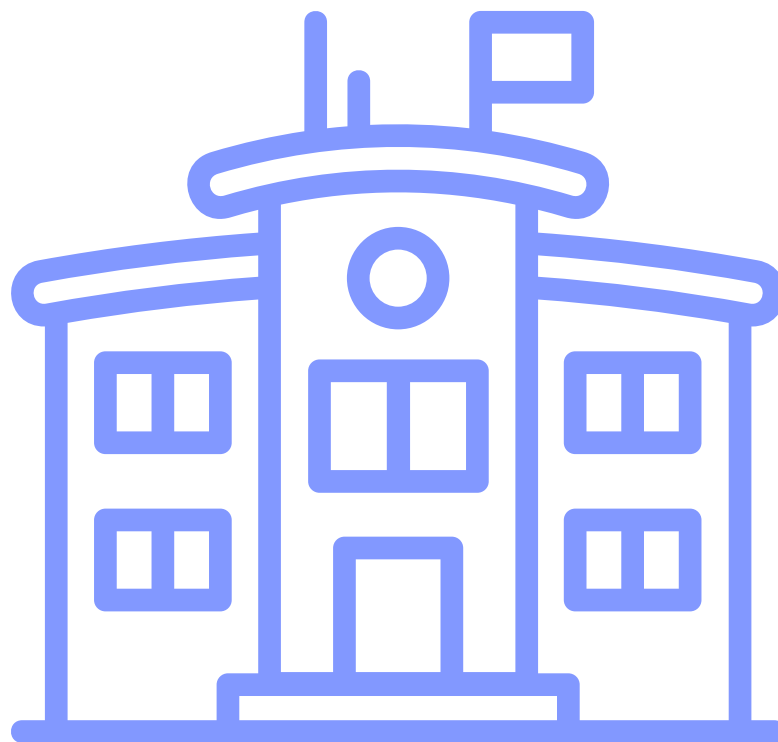
Yours in Education,

Theresa Letendre, Board Chair | Ward 3
Lisa Penzo, Vice Chair | Ward 4
Jack Molyneux | Ward 1

John Evans | Ward 2
Sharon Nichols | Ward 4
Phil Irwin | Ward 5

Did you know...

PUBLIC FUNDING DOES NOT EQUAL PUBLIC EDUCATION



PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Government of Alberta Funding: 100%

No tuition

Fees possible for:

- instructional supplies,
- transportation fees,
- uniforms, etc.



Public Accountability for Public Funding

Governed by locally-elected school board trustees



Candidates for the Board must be 18, Canadian, reside in Alberta - their place of residence to be located in the school board's boundaries - and comply with conflict of interest rules.

Annual public reporting:

- ✓ Education Plan
- ✓ Annual Education Results Report
- ✓ Audited Financial Statement

A Place for All

Welcomes every student regardless of space and resource limitations.



References: AB Ed. - [Education Act](#)
Alberta's School System

CHARTER SCHOOLS



Government of Alberta Funding: 100%

No tuition

Fees possible for:

- instructional supplies,
- transportation fees,
- uniforms, etc.



Public Accountability for Public Funding

Governed by a 'Charter Board'



Candidates for the Charter Board should represent parents and teachers of students in the school as well as community members and are guided by the vision and purpose of the charter.

Annual public reporting:

- ✓ Education Plan
- ✓ Annual Education Results Report
- ✓ Audited Financial Statement

A Place for All ?

If sufficient space and resources are unavailable, charter school authorities are not obligated to enroll every student who seeks admission.



References: AB Ed. - [Charter School Handbook](#)

PRIVATE SCHOOLS*

*ALSO CALLED INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS OR NON-PROFIT SCHOOLS



Government of Alberta Funding: 70%*

*Accredited Private Schools

Charges tuition

- No government oversight on the amount of tuition a private school charges



Public Accountability for Public Funding

Governed by a Board of Directors

(either as a society or registered as a non-profit company).



The Board is not subject to the same conflict of interest rules for public schools: Members of the same family can sit on the board and act as the secretary-treasurer, principal, and teacher of a private school.

Annual public reporting:

- ✓ Education Plan
- ✓ Annual Education Results Report
- ✗ Audited Financial Statement

Not A Place for All

Accredited Private Schools can choose which students it will accept.



References: AB Ed. - [Private Schools](#)