



BOARD OF TRUSTEES BRIEFING TO MLAs

June/July 2024

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.

Issue: *Adequate Funding for Increasingly Complex Classrooms*

Summary

Foothills School Division is continuing to evolve our continuum of supports to meet the changing needs of our staff and students. Areas of focus as we move into the 2024-2025 school year include identifying gaps in programs and services available to support all students in addition to evolving our systems and structures around inclusion. Year over year, this work continues to be challenging as classrooms become increasingly more complex. Adding to the challenge is how this work is funded.

Quick Facts

- In Budget 2023, the Honourable Minister of Education, Adrianna LaGrange introduced [a new \\$126 million \(over three years\) Classroom Complexity Grant](#) to “ensure that every student has the supports they need to succeed in their studies.”
 - FSD’s *Classroom Complexity Grant* allocation in Budget 2023 was [\\$412,050](#) while in Budget 2024 it will be [\\$405,505](#).
- In February 2024, the Honourable Minister of Education, Demetrios Nicolaides announced that Budget 2024 would provide more than [\\$1.5 billion for educational learning supports](#) to school authorities (over three years); specifically, Budget 2024 includes \$44 million for the 2024-25 school year to address increasing classroom complexities.
 - FSD received \$8,704,559 in *Services & Supports* grants in 2023-2024, while \$8,551,964 is expected for 2024-2025.
- As a result of the announced \$6-million increase for Program Unit Funding (PUF) funding, FSD will see its PUF funding allocation rise from \$218,130 in Budget 2023 to \$226,710 in Budget 2024.
- Given that the grant funding allocated to each school division is based on student enrolment, FSD has been negatively impacted by the slight dip in our 2023-2024 enrolment: from 7,950 (projected)



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to 7,778.5 (current estimation). A further decrease in funding is anticipated due to a projection of 7,614 students for 2024-2025.

Considerations

Minister of Education, Demetrios Nicolaides's [Mandate Letter](#) initiative to continue "... to implement additional educational assistants in our classrooms to address learning loss and the increasing complexity of learning needs."

Enclosure: Foothills School Division Projected Operational Funding - April 2023 and April 2024

Issue: *Concerns as to how the Provincial Bargaining and Compensation Office (PBCO) mandate is structured and the position it puts Foothills School Division in as we bargain with our union groups.*

Summary

Foothills School Division is given a bargaining mandate from PBCO which must be translated into new agreements with our unions. These mandates do not offer flexibility to meet our local needs nor are we at liberty to share our inability to vary from the mandate during bargaining. Additionally, we are in direct competition with neighboring jurisdictions and local municipalities who are under no such obligations and can give raises and/or increase compensation.

Quick Facts

- Foothills School Division as a government-funded employer is given funding from the Government of Alberta to pay the wages of our unionized and non-unionized employees.
- In 2019, the government passed the *Public Sector Employers Act (PSEA)* which authorizes the Minister of Finance to issue secret and binding bargaining directives to all public-sector employers. (https://www.parklandinstitute.ca/a_thumb_on_the_scale)
- Via the [Provincial Bargaining and Compensation Office](#) (PBCO) bargaining directives are set for negotiations with unionized staff including compensation limits and term of agreement.
- In Budget 2023, the *Teacher Salary Settlement Grant* provided funding to support increased salary costs due to the collective agreement ratified by the Alberta Teachers' Association and the Teachers' Employer Bargaining Association.
- PBCO has indicated that there will be no grant funding to support increased salary costs of unionized employees in response to follow up questions from FSD regarding the disconnect between bargaining directives and the budget.



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Considerations

Minister of Education, Demetrios Nicolaides's [Mandate Letter](#) initiative to "... [find] ways [the] government can reduce burdensome and unnecessary red tape and barriers that are hurting their members' ability to grow the economy and improve quality of life for the Albertans they serve."

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