



June 23, 2022

Hon. Adriana LaGrange
Minister of Education
228 Legislature Building
10800 97 Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Dear Hon. Minister LaGrange,

On behalf of the Board of Trustees of Aspen View Public Schools, and as per a motion passed unanimously at our meeting held June 17, 2022, I wish to formally request that the Government of Alberta renew its financial support of the Alberta School Councils' Association (ASCA).

School councils are integral to creating and maintaining thriving school communities. School councils provide a valuable mechanism through which parents and community members can meaningfully engage with schools and school boards to share their voice and enhance student learning. ASCA, as a not-for-profit society governed by an elected board of directors comprised of school council members from across Alberta, serves an essential role in supporting the work of school councils locally and within school divisions, and representing parent voice through their advocacy efforts.

Government of Alberta support of ASCA has essentially been eliminated, with funding dropping from \$650,000 in 2019-20, to \$170,000 in 2020-21, to a paltry \$15,000 in the current provincial budget, which is only available for the purpose of conducting a parent survey on learning loss. This rapid eradication of support has crippled ASCA's ability to serve as a resource for local school councils, and muffled its voice as an advocate for more than 50,000 parent volunteers who serve on school councils across the province.

We are aware that the Government of Alberta recently endeavoured to mitigate the reduction of ASCA funding by making up to \$500 available to each school council. However, we have found the eligibility requirements for this funding to be ambiguous, and the deadline for applications to be challenging for volunteer parents to meet. Moreover, our experience is that school councils' focus is on information sharing and advocacy rather than monetary concerns, which are typically managed through school fundraising societies. Asking school councils to abruptly compile funding applications represents a significant departure from their established mandates.

We note that in July 2021, you established an appointed 40-member Minister's Parent Advisory Council to provide input on provincial education initiatives. While we can appreciate that there may be value in garnering additional perspectives to inform your decisions, the subsequent dismantling of ASCA funding causes us to question whether the Minister's Parent Advisory Council is intended to replace, rather than complement, the role of ASCA. We note that ASCA's membership includes more than 1,500 school councils, representing every facet of Alberta's education system: rural and urban, public and separate, charter and francophone. We challenge the suggestion that a 40-member appointed council can provide a comparative level of engagement and input as a well-established, member-driven provincial association with an elected board.

The origins of ASCA date back to 1929. For more than 90 years, it has served an essential role in supporting the important work of school councils and facilitating the voice of parents towards the continued enhancement of education in Alberta. We call on the Government of Alberta to recognize ASCA's value and validity by reinstating the funding support it receives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Candyce Nikipelo". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Candyce Nikipelo, Chair
Board of Trustees
Aspen View Public Schools

cc. Board of Directors, Alberta School Councils' Association
All Alberta school board chairs