

## **FSE School Council – March 19, 2025**

### **Ralph SoroChan**

- 1) **APPRECIATION** – Much appreciation for making the time to be here, this evening!
- 2) **STUDENT TRANSPORTATION ELIGIBILITY CHANGE UPDATE** – In 2025-26, Alberta Education will increase the elementary eligibility distance to 1.6 kilometres—the secondary rider eligibility will remain unchanged. The change in elementary eligibility has significant financial implications for both EIPS and school families. For instance, EIPS will see a substantial reduction in funding from the province. That, in turn, will result in an inability for EIPS Student Transportation to maintain its current service level, and lead to significantly higher student transportation fees for families. Short term, the province has committed to some transition funding for 2025-26. However, that won't be the case long term. Therefore, the Division needs to develop a plan to address the new criteria and communicate the change to school families promptly.

Update: We did receive information that there will be a slight increase in transportation dollars (2.32%) for 2025-26 and that a regulation alignment is expected to occur. While this will mitigate some of the funding challenges, it will not eradicate them. We will know more, once the EIPS funding envelope is received from Alberta Education.

- 3) **BUDGET 2025-26** – The provincial budget was released on Feb 27. EIPS has not yet received its funding envelope and the funding manual. Once received, Finance will diligently analyze the numbers and get further clarification, as needed. The Board will continue to discuss budget 2025-26 planning on March 18 and 20 at special budget meetings. Stay tuned for more details in the coming months.
- 4) **REMINDER: EIPS ANNUAL FEEDBACK SURVEYS** - The Division wants to hear from you! All EIPS families and caregivers are invited to share their thoughts by completing the EIPS Annual Feedback Survey, open from **March 3-21**. Grade 9 and 12 students will complete a similar survey in class. The surveys gauge the Division's progress toward meeting the priorities, goals and outcomes outlined in the Division's [EIPS Four-Year Education Plan](#) and helps guide future decision-making. [Take the Survey](#).
- 5) **REMINDER: ASCA CONFERENCE SPONSORSHIP** - The Board approved sponsoring the registration fee for school councils to participate in the virtual 2025 Alberta School Councils' Association (ASCA) School Council Conference and Annual General Meeting on April 26-27—per school council up to a maximum of \$5,000. To qualify, members must be part of a school council with an active ASCA membership and apply before the registration deadline, April 7.
- 6) **WEEK OF INSPIRATIONAL MATH** - EIPS schools have explored all things mathematics during the Week of Inspirational Math, March 10-14. Students participated in a variety of inspiring and creative math activities and explored real-world applications of mathematics in a number of professions. New this year, was Career Snapshots which are short videos where professionals like veterinarians, psychologists and dentists share how they use math in their careers.
- 7) **EIPS SUBSTITUTE APPRECIATION WEEK** – EIPS celebrated Substitute Appreciation Week from March 10-14, 2025. Annually, EIPS officially recognizes the professional service our substitute teachers and non-teaching staff provide throughout the Division each day. We encouraged schools, boards, families and community members to take a moment to tell our valued teaching and non-teaching substitute colleagues how thankful we are for the exceptional services they bring to our school community. From all of EIPS, we appreciate for all that you do!
- 8) **ADVOCACY IN ACTION** - One of the critical roles of the (EIPS) Board of Trustees is to represent students' best interests, acting as the voice for public education on behalf of the communities

they serve. Each year, the Board determines the focus of its advocacy efforts, which are also in alignment with the Division's [priorities and goals](#). The intent of the Board's advocacy is twofold: To influence the Government of Alberta's education policy, and to seek and secure sufficient resources to meet the needs of all EIPS students. See the attachment for advocacy efforts.

- 9) **REMINDER: UPCOMING TRUSTEE ELECTIONS IN OCTOBER 2025** – The next municipal election is on October 20, 2025. If you or anyone you know is interested in running for public office, check out the details for candidates on [www.eips.ca](http://www.eips.ca). Two trustees will be elected from Electoral Subdivision No. 1, comprised of lands within the corporate limits of the City of Fort Saskatchewan.
- 10) **CAREGIVER SERIES: March Sessions** - Recovery Alberta offers free online programming for parents and caregivers of children and youth. Sessions are offered through Zoom. The list of [March 2025 sessions](#) is now available.
- 11) **NEXT BOARD MEETING** – The next regular Board meeting takes place on March 20, 2025, at 10 AM. Board meetings are held in the Elk Island Public School boardroom. EIPS also livestreams public Board meetings on its YouTube channel.
- 12) **INQUIRIES?** - If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact me at [ralph.sorochan@eips.ca](mailto:ralph.sorochan@eips.ca) or 780 417 8107.
- 13) Have a wonderful rest of your month and a well-deserved spring break!



# EIPS Advocacy in Action

## Introduction

One of the critical roles of the Elk Island Public Schools (EIPS) Board of Trustees is to represent students' best interests, acting as the voice for public education on behalf of the communities they serve. Each year, the Board determines the focus of its advocacy efforts, which are also in alignment with the Division's [priorities and goals](#). The intent of the Board's advocacy is twofold: To influence the Government of Alberta's education policy, and to seek and secure sufficient resources to meet the needs of all EIPS students.

The Advocacy Committee met in October 2024 to recommend the areas of focus for the 2024-25 school year, and the advocacy plan was subsequently reviewed and approved by the Board of Trustees as a whole.

## Advocacy Priorities for 2024-25:

The Board identified areas for advocacy efforts which align with the focus areas of the Strategic Plan. Advocacy in these areas occur as a matter of course in interactions with others and as opportunities present themselves.

1. Education funding
  2. The value of public education
  3. Autonomous school boards
  4. Capital investment
  5. Curriculum
- Education funding: *funding serves the student needs, and is allocated in ways that are equitable, efficient and give students the best chance of academic and career success*
  - The value of public education: *equitable access, opportunities that meet the needs of a diverse student body, and choice offered within public education.*
  - Autonomy of locally elected school boards: *school boards should have the flexibility to invest resources in ways that best meet the unique demands of the communities we serve.*
  - Capital investment: *addressing capacity issues and the need to provide learning spaces that promote student achievement, growth, and enhanced career pathways.*
  - Curriculum: *Advocate for funding and resources to effectively transition students into new curricula; provide constructive and meaningful feedback to the Minister of Education on student challenges emerging with the revised curriculum and the transition to grades where new curriculum is not yet in place.*

Quarterly, through this newsletter, *EIPS Advocacy in Action*, the Division will advise school families and EIPS employees about the Board's work and advocacy efforts to ensure EIPS continues to provide high-quality, student-centred education.

## Advocacy Efforts: Fall 2024 and Winter 2025

### Correspondence and conversations:

Throughout the fall of 2024 and winter of 2025, the Board of Trustees sent two letters to elected officials, as well as engaging one-on-one:

- *September:* Sent a letter to the Hon. Demetrious Nicolaides, Minister of Education, advocating for financial support of the proposed replacement junior/senior high school in Fort Saskatchewan—in light of the announcement of accelerated funding for school builds and modular construction.
- *October:* Sent a letter to the Hon. Demetrious Nicolaides, Minister of Education, providing suggestions about the revised model for education funding in Alberta.
- *October:* Met with Sherwood Park MLA Kyle Kasawski to discuss the accelerated funding for school builds and modular construction; rural/urban board challenges; board autonomy and flexibility; cross-ministry work; engagement; classroom complexity; and school construction and capital requests.
- *January:* Met with the Hon. Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk, Parliamentary Secretary for Settlement Services and Ukrainian Evacuees and MLA for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville to continue discussions about career pathways, apprenticeship and trades opportunities for students within Alberta's Industrial Heartland, and EIPS' vision for a collegiate school in Fort Saskatchewan.
- *February:* Superintendent Stoddard sent a letter to Mr. Jeff Willan, Assistant Deputy Minister/Senior Financial Officer, Alberta Education, appealing the decision about transportation funding eligibility for outreach students—according to the 2024-2025 School Authority Funding Manuals. A letter from the Board Chair is being sent to the Hon. Demetrious Nicolaides, Minister of Education, to bring the matter forward for his attention.

### Other

Trustees and the superintendent also attended additional events and meetings that allowed for opportunities to discuss issues and advocate for education:

- *October:* Attended the Strathcona County Chamber of Commerce Luncheon and General Meeting, at which Mark Plamondon, Executive Director of the Alberta Industrial Heartland Association, spoke about driving economic and environmental outcomes in the region.
- *October:* Attended the Fort Saskatchewan and District Chamber of Commerce 2024 Business Awards, as EIPS was nominated in the category of Non-Profit/Community Organization of the Year.
- *November:* Attended the Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA) Fall General Meeting, including the MLA breakfast with the Hon. Nate Glubish, Minister of Technology and Innovation.
- *December:* Took part in EIPS' presentation to the Fort Saskatchewan and District Chamber of Commerce members regarding the proposed collegiate program and requested replacement school build in that community.
- *December:* Attended the Christmas Open House events held by the Hon. Nate Glubish, Minister of Technology and Innovation and MLA for Strathcona-Sherwood Park; and Kyle Kasawski, MLA for Sherwood Park.
- *January:* Took part in the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) Local 28 dinner meeting with EIPS Board of Trustees
- *January:* Participated in the final public engagement info session with school families regarding the transition plan for French Immersion students in Strathcona County and Fort Saskatchewan.