

October 1, 2009

Dear _____:

I am writing to you today with extreme concern for the future of education in Alberta. I believe that most Albertans are aware of the Government of Alberta's increasing deficit and the need for fiscal restraint. Lower natural gas prices, a higher Canadian dollar and other declining revenue have increased the deficit forecast to \$6.9 billion for 2009/10. My worry is that cutbacks to the Alberta education system will affect students and could impact their future choices in this province and globally.

Until now, Alberta Education has made financial decisions that have enhanced the education of students in this province. For the Edmonton Catholic School District, Alberta Education targeted funding has resulted in:

- An increase in the number of students who have completed high school and received a high school diploma. Our District's five-year rate for high school completion is 80.2%.
- Increased results for the Grades 3, 6 and 9 Provincial Achievement Tests. For the 2008 Provincial Achievement Tests, Edmonton Catholic students in Grades 3, 6 and 9 exceeded the province in 22 out of 24 standards on provincial achievement exams. As well, 2008 Diploma Examination results show that Edmonton Catholic Schools improved in 15 out of 22 standards.
- 87.4% of our teachers, parents and students believe that students are safe at school, are learning the importance of caring for others, are learning respect for others and are treated fairly in school. These are the results from the 2009 Accountability Pillar survey and have increased each year for the past five years.

In addition, funding from the province has reduced class sizes, which allows teachers to provide individual attention to a greater number of students on a more frequent basis; early literacy programs give students in the District's 100 Voices program (for 3 ½ to 4 ½ years old) a head start on learning, and District literacy programs enhance learning for all students including at-risk students. This funding continues to be crucial as the number of English Language Learners requiring English as a Second Language (ESL) programs is growing by 10 to 15% a year in the District.

In addition to these successes, there are shortfalls in educational funding in several areas. The Edmonton Catholic School District continues to lobby Government for increased funding/new funding in the following areas that remain a serious concern:

- Severe Special Needs funding
- Infrastructure Maintenance Renewal (IMR) Funding (to maintain safe and healthy school environments)
- Curriculum costs
- Plant Operation and Maintenance funding (to maintain clean and safe schools and facilities throughout the District)
- Full Day Kindergarten (request for new funding)

I know that Alberta Education must find a total of \$56 million from the education system for the 2009/2010 fiscal year and there are difficult decisions ahead.

Please consider my concerns carefully. **Any reductions in funding** will affect student achievement, and the future and success of Alberta is in the hands of students who are currently in the education system.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,