



Dec. 17, 2025

Honourable Danielle Smith
Premier of Alberta
President of the Executive Council
Minister of Intergovernmental and International Relations
307 Legislative Building
10800-97 Avenue
Edmonton, AB. T5K 2B6

Honourable Demetrios Nicolaidis
Minister of Education and Childcare
228 Legislative Building
10800-97 Avenue
Edmonton, AB. T5K 2B6

Dear Honourable Premier Smith and Honourable Minister Nicolaidis:

On behalf of the Public School Boards' Association of Alberta (PSBAA), representing Alberta's public school boards and the locally elected trustees who govern them, I am writing to provide our perspective on the work of the Cabinet Committee on Class Size and Classroom Complexity.

The PSBAA welcomes the establishment of this Committee and appreciates the Government of Alberta's recognition that class size and classroom complexity are critical issues affecting student achievement, student well-being and the sustainability of Alberta's public education system. Trustees across the province hear from educators who encounter these challenges first-hand in classrooms every day, and we believe this work is both timely and necessary.

As the Committee undertakes its deliberations, the PSBAA respectfully offers the following principles for consideration.

Evidence-Based and "Smart" Funding Decisions

First, the PSBAA strongly urges that the Committee's recommendations be grounded in scientific evidence, credible research and measurable outcomes. Class size and classroom complexity are not abstract concepts; they are well-documented drivers of educational success and student well-being.

Effective solutions will require smart, targeted funding—funding that recognizes where complexity is greatest, where needs are most acute, and where evidence demonstrates the strongest impact on learning. One-size-fits-all approaches risk missing the realities faced by students and educators in diverse communities across Alberta. Funding models must be responsive, transparent and aligned with research on student outcomes—particularly for students with complex learning and social needs.

Respect for Local Autonomy and Governance

Second, the PSBAA emphasizes the importance of local autonomy in establishing and applying standards related to inclusive education and student supports. Alberta’s school boards govern diverse communities—urban, rural, remote, and northern—each with unique demographic, cultural and socioeconomic contexts.

Locally elected boards must retain the flexibility to work directly with families to determine how best to support students. Prescriptive, centralized standards that limit professional judgment or local decision-making risk undermining the ability of school divisions to respond effectively to student needs. Trustees are accountable to their communities and are best positioned to balance provincial expectations with local realities.

Balancing Individual and Collective Needs

Third, any standards or policy frameworks developed through this process must allow school boards to provide the best possible education for each child individually, while also ensuring positive outcomes for all students collectively.

Classrooms are dynamic environments. Decisions made to support one student—particularly those with complex needs—have implications for peers, educators and the broader learning environment. Effective policy must acknowledge this balance and ensure that boards have the resources, flexibility and professional discretion necessary to support inclusive, safe and effective classrooms for all learners.

A Broad Understanding of Classroom Complexity

Finally, the PSBAA encourages the Committee to adopt a comprehensive and realistic understanding of classroom complexity. Complexity extends well beyond formal learning needs or diagnoses. Trustees across Alberta consistently report that classrooms are increasingly affected by intersecting social challenges, including but not limited to:

- Poverty and food insecurity
- Housing instability and homelessness
- Mental health challenges
- Substance abuse and addiction
- Exposure to violence, including gang activity
- Trauma and adverse childhood experiences
- Diverse learning needs and disabilities

These factors profoundly influence student readiness to learn, and the demands placed on educators and schools. Addressing classroom complexity therefore requires cross-ministry awareness, sustained investment, and policies that reflect the lived realities of today's classrooms. This is not just a classroom issue, it is a societal issue that must be addressed holistically.

Conclusion

The PSBAA remains committed to constructive collaboration with the Government of Alberta and looks forward to contributing meaningfully to this important work. We believe evidence-based funding, respect for local governance, balanced policy design, and a holistic understanding of classroom complexity are essential to the Committee's success.

Thank you for your leadership and for the opportunity to share the perspective of Alberta's public school boards. We would welcome the opportunity to meet with members of the Committee or government officials to discuss these matters further, should the need arise.

Respectfully,



Lorraine Stewart
President, Public School Boards' Association of Alberta

cc: Members of the Class Size and Complexity Cabinet Committee
Lori Pillipow, Deputy Minister, Education and Childcare
James Johnson, Chief of Staff, Minister of Education and Childcare
Board of Directors, PSBAA
Troy Tait, Chief Executive Officer, PSBAA
Member Boards, PSBAA