

The Honourable Mr. Demetrios Nicolaides  
Minister of Education and Childcare  
Executive Branch  
228 Legislature Building  
10800-87 Ave  
Edmonton, Alberta  
T5K 2B6

May 30th 2025

Dear Minister Nicolaides,

I write to you not just with concern, but with deep frustration and disappointment - regarding the worsening crisis in Alberta's education system. The situation facing our educational support staff, and the vulnerable students they serve, is nothing short of alarming.

As Minister of Education and Childcare, you should already be aware that the federal government has withdrawn Jordan's Principle funding for non-reserve schools in Alberta. This decision is not only a disgraceful step backward, but its consequences are catastrophic. In the Parkland School Division alone, we are set to lose nearly **a quarter** of our educational assistants (EAs) for the upcoming school year and it is my understanding that similar cuts are happening across the province. We have heard nothing in the way of standing up and fighting back, from you or the Alberta Government. We need to raise awareness of this impending crisis - with the public and especially those parents of students in Alberta schools!

Let me be blunt....**this will devastate our Alberta schools** and affect so many more students than ever before. The students most affected by this are those who can least afford it—children with complex learning needs, those with behavioural challenges, and thousands of students who rely daily on EAs for equitable access to education. This isn't just an Indigenous issue. It is an Alberta-wide crisis.

Consider this: in Parkland School Division, some already overburdened schools will see their EA staff reduced from 11 to just 5, serving student populations of 600. Another school will be left with only 4 EAs; another, just 6...and this is the average number of EAs that will be left at many schools. These schools were already struggling to meet the needs of high-needs learners. Now, we are actively choosing to let more children fall through the cracks, and those cracks are growing into chasms.

Students in upper elementary grades reading at a Grade 1 or 2 level are already under-supported and next year, many will receive **no support at all**. It is physically impossible for a school to support those students who need it, with only 5 EAs. Likely, 2 or 3 of those will be working strictly one to one with a student who has special needs, therefore leaving only 2 or 3 others to support the rest of the school! Remember, many classrooms within each school have a variety of student learning levels, and most have at least 1 or 2 students on IEPs. Some classrooms I know of personally, in just one school, have 9 IEPs in one room! So we are now saying, tough luck, no support for any of you...all because of funding and the Government prioritizing the wrong things (proven earlier this year by ridiculous mandates placed on wage increases for Support Staff.).

To make matters worse, leadership in our Division continues to spend over \$100,000 annually on three-day retreats to the Banff Fairmont Hotel. The contrast between that and the cuts hitting the front lines of student support is as outrageous as it is telling. This is leadership that has lost sight of its priorities.

Our EAs are not “extras.” They are qualified professionals who de-escalate crisis situations, manage diverse learning needs, and play a critical role in allowing classroom teachers to teach. Slashing their numbers is not cost-saving—it is **a complete destruction of public education**. If this continues, Alberta will slide into the lowest student outcomes in the country. We are at a crossroads, and we are heading the wrong way....fast!

Minister, we need you **now more than ever** to take a stand and hold yourself and your Government accountable. We need you to step up and show your understanding and support with immediate, **substantial** provincial funding to retain and restore EA positions. I invite you to join me in school to actually witness how desperate the need is for much higher numbers of Support Staff!

This is not just a budget issue. It is a test of values. Are we going to protect the supports that allow **all** children - regardless of their learning abilities or backgrounds - to succeed? Or are we going to abandon them?

Our students deserve better. Alberta deserves better. I am asking that you push harder, speak louder, and lead stronger on this urgent issue.

Sincerely,

Wendy Harman

EA Certified / CUPE Local 5543 President

[cupe5543pres@gmail.com](mailto:cupe5543pres@gmail.com)