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BY E-MAIL
(education.minister@gov.ab.ca)

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

Dear Minister Nicolaidis,

We write to you today to highlight serious and ongoing concerns regarding the funding and roll out of the Classroom Complexity Teams. As a Union representing over 44,000 workers across the province, many in the education sector, we are hearing troubling reports about hiring processes, sustainability of funding, and attraction and retention of qualified professionals.

We recognize the dire need to address the increasing complexity, overcrowding, and instances of aggression in Alberta classrooms. Our members know better than most about the negative consequences of crowded classrooms, the serious effects of a lack of supports and resources for students, and how difficult it is to avoid downstream issues when early preventative measures are not implemented.

The classroom complexity team funding will be vital to addressing these concerns. However, we are already seeing issues with creating these teams and the major questions it raises about the future of the funding. Many school boards are only offering these roles as temporary positions due to the unclear nature of the funding commitment. This means that the highly qualified and experienced educational assistants that should be comprising these teams are effectively being excluded from applying to these positions, as it would compromise their seniority and job security. Hiring practices should not contravene existing Collective Agreements, and Employees shouldn't be forced to take the gamble of a temporary position with unclear funding to take on the task of supporting Alberta's most vulnerable students.

The cuts we saw to the Program Unit Funding (PUF) in 2020 have resulted in harm to students, as predicted, and the lack of support through early interventions means an increase in complexity and acute needs in later grades.

MARK HANCOCK

National President/Président national

CANDACE RENNICK

National Secretary-Treasurer/Secrétaire-trésorière nationale

DAWN BELLEROSE, PATRICK GLOUTNEY, SHERRY HILLIER, GINA MCKAY, KAREN RANALLETTA

General Vice-Presidents/Vice-présidences générales

The real solutions to this overarching problem are to:

- Reimplement robust early intervention funding
- Create permanent and sustainable positions to address current complexity
- Ensure that these professionals are paid a living wage to attract and retain them in the positions
- Provide permanent and stable funding so school divisions are able to plan for the future and hire qualified individuals who can make a career in these positions, providing long term support and stability in the classroom

Throwing short term funding at the problem will only create stopgap and ineffective solutions and does nothing to ease the long-term pressures of growing classroom sizes and complexity. Staff, teachers, parents, and students need to know they are walking into well-funded, well-staffed and well-resourced classrooms.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss these concerns and put forward solutions that could support our students now and into the future.

Regards,

Raj Uppal
CUPE Alberta President

Nicole Spring
AEEC Chair

