

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 2010-11 ALBERTA BUDGET FOR EDUCATION

This afternoon the government of Alberta released its budget for the 2010-11 fiscal year and Alberta's schools have managed to evade the cuts threatened last year. Full details of the budget can be found on the Alberta government website at www.budget2010.alberta.ca

Highlights

- Total budget for education is up 0.8% to \$6.3 billion
- Operating budget for school boards is up \$249 million to \$5.4 billion
- No increase to school board grants
- Grants will handle increased student numbers; enrolment is projected to grow by 0.76%
- Additional funding is provided for ESL and certain ECS grants
- Daily physical education grant is eliminated (but program requirement remains)
- High school completion grant is not continued
- Funding for CTS health pilot projects for the third year is discontinued
- Class size initiative funding continues (now \$222 million) and remains targeted funding
- Distribution of Class Size Initiative funding will be allocated on a per capita basis to be more focused on and responsive to K-6 grades
- Funding for CTS courses will be tiered; CEU funding for courses requiring a smaller number of students for safety reasons will be larger
- AISI will continue (\$79 million); the Minister announced three years of funding yesterday at the AISI conference
- Student health initiative funding restored to \$49 million
- Total transportation funding is unchanged at \$259 million with changes to formulas dealing with rural and urban bussing issues
- No new infrastructure projects, but \$513 million previously announced is to be completed (52 new or replacement schools, 49 modernization projects)
- School boards will be expected to hold the line on maintenance
- Pension funding commitments fully honoured (\$261 million, representing a significant increase in costs)
- Private school funding is \$4.2 million with no increase to grants
- Department of Education funding is further reduced by \$4 million; the reduction will be achieved through program efficiencies, delaying programs, a salary freeze for management personnel and realignment of Department operations

While no money was budgeted to allow for wage increases for school employees, collective agreements for teachers will provide them with an increase based on the Alberta Average Weekly Earnings index. The minister is encouraging boards to maintain staffing, to use reserves to do so and pledges cooperation should a deficit at the school board level be required to maintain staffing levels.