

*For Immediate Release*

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## EICS Approves 2023-2024 School Year Budget

*Sherwood Park, AB* - The Elk Island Catholic Schools (EICS) Board of Trustees approved the division's 2023-2024 school year budget of \$81.2 million at their monthly meeting on Thursday, May 25, 2023.

The budget is based on a projected student enrolment of 6,179 (excluding home education students), as the division is expected to see increased enrolment for the first time in five years. There is an estimated \$67.5 million in operational funding expected from Alberta Education, an increase of \$1.3 million (2%) over the 2022-2023 school year.

This additional funding from the province, however, was not enough to cover the increased staffing costs nor keep pace with other inflationary costs. As a result, EICS had to make the difficult decision to reduce its total staff by 25 Full-Time Equivalencies (FTEs) – done so primarily by not filling the instructional positions of retiring staff and not renewing temporary instructional contracts.

At the request of Alberta's Education Minister, the division has been deficit spending for the past two years to drop its reserves to no more than 3.2% of its annual budget – which is expected to be achieved by the end of the 2023-2024 school year. This reserve spending was used to retain staff in a period of declining enrolment and essentially reduce class sizes.

"This decision to reduce the division's staff is not made lightly, but it was done in a fashion where impacts to our students and classrooms have been minimized as much as possible", said Superintendent Paul Corrigan. "EICS continues to prioritize delivering remarkable Catholic Education and developing the whole child through faith-integrated learning. Although underfunded, our budget for next school year is no exception to our commitment".

"Staff reductions have an impact on our students, families, and communities, and we would not have agreed to these reductions if there was another feasible option for our district", said EICS Board of Trustees Chair Le-Ann Ewaskiw. "Our Board will continue to advocate for increased funding in future meetings with our MLAs and Alberta Education".

Despite budget challenges, enrolments at EICS schools are projected to increase, and we are excited to offer new programs this fall. This includes Holy Redeemer Catholic School's hockey academy, Madonna Catholic School's Cogito Academy, and Holy Spirit Catholic School's musical theatre program. In addition, all EICS Kindergarten to Grade 4 schools are offering Pre-Kindergarten next year, and the division is partnering with other educational institutions to provide online classes through its St. Isidore Learning Center.

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*EICS, part of Alberta's publicly funded education system, is committed to developing educational opportunities in the context of Gospel values. EICS is dedicated to providing quality, faith-based learning environments to students of any background and faith, where their skills are nurtured and celebrated by dedicated, caring staff.*

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