



## Premier of Alberta

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Office of the Premier, 307 Legislature Building, Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2B6 Canada

### Letter to Alberta Parents and Guardians

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Over the past three weeks, families across Alberta have faced uncertainty, stress, and disruption. I want to begin by saying thank you. Thank you for your patience, your strength, and your unwavering support for your children during this difficult time.

The teachers' strike has been hard on everyone, including teachers, but especially on students and their families. I know how deeply you care about your children's education, and I understand the frustration and worry that comes when schools are closed and routines are upended. I want you to know that I hear you, and I am committed to making things better. Today, I'm sharing important news. Our government has introduced the **Back to School Act**, which will bring students back into the classroom, starting Wednesday, October 29. But this is not just about ending a strike. It's about beginning a new chapter for education in Alberta, one that puts students, families, and teachers at the heart of everything we do.

We did not take this step lightly. After multiple attempts at bargaining with the teachers' union and even reaching multiple tentative offers, all of which were rejected, last week we offered the Alberta Teachers' Association a path forward through enhanced mediation, a process that would have allowed teachers to return to classrooms while negotiations continued with the help of a neutral third party. Unfortunately, union leaders declined this offer. At the same time, the government received clear and urgent warnings from education experts, parents, and community leaders. After three weeks of missed school, the evidence was undeniable: students were beginning to suffer irreparable harm academically, socially, and emotionally.

Prolonged school closures can lead to increased anxiety, especially for students in key transition years like Grade 6 and Grade 9. High school students also expressed fears about falling behind in their studies and missing out on critical opportunities like sports, extracurriculars, and university preparation. Younger children struggled with disrupted routines, social isolation, and the loss of safe, structured environments where they learn and grow every day.

We also heard from parents who were deeply concerned, not just about their children's learning, but about their mental health, their friendships, and their sense of stability. Many families, especially those with fewer resources or children with complex needs, were being hit the hardest. These are not abstract concerns, they are real, and they are urgent.

As Premier, I have a duty to act when the well-being of Alberta's children is at risk. As I've said before when you get to a point where irreparable harm is being caused to kids, that's where we must draw a line. We cannot allow this strike to continue. We must get our students back in class, where they belong.

We have heard loud and clear from teachers and parents that with over 80,000 new students entering our system over the past three years – supports to address class size and increasing classroom complexity is necessary.

Passing the **Back to School Act**, means we are investing in our teachers with a 12-17% salary increase, a recognition of the essential role they play in shaping our children's futures. The **Back to School Act** will also commit the government to hiring 3,000 new teachers and 1,500 educational assistants over the next three years. This is on top of the \$8.6 billion dollars we've already committed to build 130 new schools by 2030. This means smaller class sizes, more support for students, and less strain on educators.

But we know that funding alone isn't enough. That's why we are dedicating the next two years to fixing the deeper issues in our education system. Our plan includes:

- **School Infrastructure:** Through the **Schools Now Program**, we are fast-tracking the construction and modernization of **130 schools by 2030**, prioritizing Alberta's fastest-growing communities and schools most in need of upgrades.
- **A New Task Force to address class size and complexity:** The Minister of Education will also be creating a Class Size and Complexity Task Force to ensure our government is able to hear directly from teachers, educational assistants, parents, superintendents and trustees when we make decisions or develop new policy.
- **Safer Classrooms:** Work is already underway to develop new policies and supports to address violence and aggression in schools, ensuring every student and teacher feels safe and respected.
- **Individualized Student Supports:** We are expanding access to assessments and interventions for students with complex needs, including those with learning disabilities, mental health challenges, and language barriers.
- **Modernizing Education Funding:** We are overhauling how education dollars are allocated and will soon have a new model to ensure funding is transparent, efficient, and responsive to the needs of every school and student.
- **Data-Driven Planning:** The Minister of Education has directed School Boards to provide him with detailed classroom level data to better understand staffing, student needs, and classroom complexity. This will guide how we deploy resources to ensure that every student receives the support they need to succeed.
- **Depoliticizing the Classroom:** We are committed to keeping politics and ideology out of the classroom, so that teachers can focus on delivering a curriculum rooted in knowledge, critical thinking, and academic excellence.

We are turning the page. We are moving forward. And we are doing it together, with you.

I ask that you give us that time to implement this plan, to pass the legislation, to roll out the policies, and most importantly, to make real changes in your child's classroom.

Thank you for standing by your children, for supporting our teachers, and for believing in the power of public education. Together, we will build a better, brighter future for every student in Alberta.

With deep gratitude and determination,

**Danielle Smith**

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Danielle Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "D".

Premier of Alberta