

**speaking  
notes**

Council of School Councils – Capital Planning and  
Capacity

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Council of School Councils  
Meeting  
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learning | **as unique** | as every student



**Calgary Board  
of Education**

Hello. My name is George Lane and I am the trustee who represents Wards 6 & 7 in the City of Calgary. Tonight, I'll be sharing some information about the challenge our schools are facing based on capacity.

We need more schools for our students. We know we need many more schools, and we need them now. Across the province, the need for more space for students is urgent, and this is especially true for the Calgary Board of Education.

Our situation is very serious, and very urgent. There are three factors involved: growth, capacity, and expectations.

Our school populations are growing, as the population of our city grows. This puts pressure on our existing 225 schools. The number of students and the school's capacity is used to calculate school "utilization."

Our goal for the overall system average utilization is to be at about 80 per cent. At this level, schools can use their space flexibly. This flexible space is one way we are able to personalize the learning experience our students have.

But some of our schools are overcrowded, with utilization rates above 100 per cent. A small number of inner-city schools are closer to 60 per cent, but that does not mean that they are at risk of closing in the foreseeable future. We need all of our schools.

Overall, our system average is just above our target of 80 per cent—well above the provincial average, which sits at about 70 per cent.

We have been waiting a long time for new schools from the Province. The last new school funding was announced more than five years ago. Even if long-awaited new schools were announced today they would not open before September 2016. That means before we are able to open another new school, our utilization will reach almost 87 per cent, and our schools will only continue to become more crowded. The only solution is more capacity.

We know that Calgarians have high expectations for their students and their education. We are one of the best public education systems in the world, and expectations for improvement, choice, career pathways and learning continue to rise.

Our students deserve more.

Our parents deserve more.

Employers deserve more.

Calgarians deserve more.

So if there is huge growth and shrinking capacity, what does it take to get new schools? New schools depend entirely on provincial funding.

We depend on the province for 100 per cent of funding for new schools. As a board, when we meet with parents, this sometimes comes as a surprise. You have often asked us, “Why doesn’t the CBE build more schools?”

The truth is that Alberta school districts cannot build schools without provincial funding. The government has promised Albertans 50 new schools and 70 major modernizations for the entire province. It may seem like a lot of construction but it isn’t nearly enough given the need.

The CBE has one-sixth of the students in Alberta and our three-year capital plan requests 16 new schools and 20 major modernizations. The total estimated cost of these priority projects is \$667 million.

As your trustees, we represent the needs of 107,000 students, and many new and established communities in Calgary require either a new school, an addition to their school or significant maintenance at their neighbourhood school. We need to balance the needs of every community and every student across our entire system by putting new schools where they are needed most.

Each year, the CBE is required to submit a list of new school and school modernization projects to the provincial government. This list is prepared by Administration and is called the Three-Year School Capital Plan. It’s available to you to review at any time on the CBE website.

The Board of Trustees approves this plan, which is then submitted to the Minister of Education. The Province then funds new schools and major modernizations based on the information in the plan.

We work with our partners including the Province of Alberta and the City of Calgary. We work closely with the City of Calgary's planning department. Thanks to our strong relationship, we know and understand the population trends taking place in Calgary communities. We have been tracking these trends for years and the data we receive from the City of Calgary informs our strategies and school capital plans.

Administration is currently working on the Three-Year School Capital Plan. After 10 years, administration is amending the ranking formula used to determine capital priorities, which will guide new capital plan. We look forward to debating the plan in public later this spring.

Ultimately, our province faces a challenging budget. As a system, we remain hopeful that the government will keep its commitment to fund new schools for our students in Calgary. We need them, and that need will only continue to grow.

We know that this situation impacts many communities. We hear from parents that are extremely passionate about access to education for their children, and we are very grateful to them for this passion.

We can all tell our government that schools matter. Please consider writing to your MLA or other decision

makers. Let them know that education and schools are a top priority for Albertans.