STEM COLLEGIATE EDMONTON

Three Year School Capital Plan-2025-2028

March 18, 2024

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Executive Summary

STEM Collegiate was proud to be the first Collegiate approved in the Province of Alberta.

We opened our doors in September 2023 to our first grade 7-9 students and will be expanding to grade 10 programming for 2025 and thereafter grades 11-12.

Alberta Education's investments in collegiates demonstrate their importance towards fulfilling the commitments to bring innovative educational practices to more students, linking programming to post-secondary institutions, and ensuring students can explore career pathways prior to graduation from high school.

Our initial site was never intended to house a 7-12 continuum. Rather, it was acknowledged to be a temporary starting point while we sought a permanent solution in a facility that can meet the needs of a cutting-edge STEM program.

Expanding our school capacity would address several directives outlined in the Education's Business Plan, numerous Ministerial Mandate letters, directives of the Premier, and the public commitments of elected officials to support both Choice in Education as well as STEM Education. The *Choice in Education Act* sought to "ensure that Albertans can exercise choice within our strong and diverse school system." Capital investment is required to deliver on the promise of this legislation. Our proposal meets the criteria for evaluating capital projects.

Allocating capital dollars to organizations developing innovative programming tied to Alberta's economic future is an important consideration moving forward. We know that other public boards launched STEM programs to follow our lead – thus demonstrating that any investment in STEM Collegiate will have a multiplier effect.

The lack of options for charter schools to grow is the major barrier to government fulfilling their commitment to improving access to Choice in Education. We have 2 priorities that will help fulfill commitments to growing Choice in Education and will address the high demand parents and students have for our program.

STEM Collegiate - Meeting Government Priorities

The investment in Collegiates demonstrates government's commitments to align K-12 education with opportunities for career pathways and post-secondary alignment.

Hitting the Mark – Alignment with Government Strategic Plans

Examples:

Government of Alberta Strategic Plan

Ministerial Mandate Letters

Education Business Plan

Alberta Infrastructure: Building Forward: Alberta's 20-Year Strategic Capital Plan

Choice in Education Legislation

Career Education Task Force

The Career Education Task Force, along with Education's business plan, Ministerial mandate letters and the strategic plans of a number of departments outlines the critical need for a new approach to STEM based education – one tied to industry and post-secondary- and perfectly in alignment with the vision, mission and values of STEM Collegiate. A few excerpts (in italics) are noted below:

Mandate Letters – Areas STEM Collegiate contributes to the fulfillment of the Premier's direction:

There are a number of areas where we have achieved or are working towards fulfilling many of the policy directives of government. Below are some highlights:

Education Minister

Continuing to bring more collegiate schools online across the province to create pathways for students to post-secondary or their chosen fields in the workforce.

(*Investing $20 million over 4 years) in promoting career pathways*

Developing more teacher training for career and technology studies.

Ensuring Alberta's educational funding model continues to promote parental choice in education. This includes ensuring that Alberta's public, separate, francophone, charter, independent (private) schools and early childhood services operators and home education systems are all appropriately funded to ensure the highest educational outcomes for students.

Working to significantly increase the number of schools in the communities of greatest need.

Making recommendations on the best way to create an expedited teaching certificate to fast-track instructors of skilled trades and other professions into teaching positions in junior high and high schools.

Assisting each ministry to execute on their mandate to design a ministry-specific job attraction strategy that raises awareness for young Albertans, especially those in grades 9-12, and adults changing careers of the skilled trades and professions available in each economic sector including pathways for education, apprenticeship, and training.

Minister of Advanced Education

Acting as Alberta's lead advocate and champion of the skilled trades and professions to ensure, as early as junior high, that this education track has parity of esteem as a desirable education pathway that will lead to highly rewarding careers.

Minister of Jobs, Economy, and Trade

Working directly with each economic ministry across government, design a ministry specific job-attraction strategy to raise the awareness of young Albertans (aged 16 to 24), and adults changing careers, of the skilled trades and professions available in each economic sector, including pathways for education, apprenticeship, and training.

Minister of Arts, Culture and the Status of Women

Supporting the participation of women in Alberta's economy, including supporting women pursuing careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields.

Alignment with Government of Alberta Strategic Plan

Expanding STEM Collegiate's footprint aligns with several key provincial objectives:

- **Providing quality education and skills development to Albertans**: STEM Collegiate has already demonstrated innovative programming in strategic STEM areas representing the future of the province. Our program will also "ensure Albertans have the knowledge, skills and competencies needed for family-supporting jobs that contribute to economic recovery, growth and diversification."
- **Building better communities:** The long-term positive effects of youth having the skills, attitudes and knowledge to be successful are well know. Our focus on industry and post-secondary connections ensures students have an understanding of future opportunities they can take advantage of.
- **Attracting investment and growing the economy:** While Edmonton continues to attract record venture capital, industry leaders acknowledge there is still a strong need to better align education with the in-demand knowledge and skills needed to drive an innovation and knowledge economy. Our students will take their place as key leaders in an innovation economy after graduation.

Alignment with Education's Business Plan

In the plan are several performance metrics:

Outcome 1:

1.a ***Performance Measure: High school completion rate***

Through our charter mandate, STEM Collegiate's students will be taking specialized programming designed to ensure completion of high school and transition to post-secondary..

1.b ***Performance Measure: High school to post-secondary transition rate***

STEM Collegiate students will be focused on pathways to post-secondary as part of our fundamental charter programming.

Outcome 3:

Alberta's students have access to a variety of learning opportunities to enhance competitiveness in the modern economy.

There is no public school offering the breadth and depth of programming we do from grades 7-12. We are currently only limited by our current building capacity of 550 students.

Alignment with Ministry of Infrastructure

In *Building Forward: Alberta's 20-Year Strategic Capital Plan*, the Ministry of Infrastructure offers a vision for capital investments in the education space: "Investments in education pay huge dividends in developing our economy and society. Providing our young people with world-class K-12 education sets them on the right track to be competitive and successful in a changing world. This also leads to strong families and communities, healthy and fulfilled citizens, a creative and entrepreneurial workforce, and a prosperous and resilient Alberta overall."

Synergies with ***Building Forward: Alberta's 20-Year Strategic Capital Plan***

- *Building Forward* recognizes "a future that's going to be filled with technological innovation, profound change and many opportunities" and delineates an infrastructure plan that will "help our communities and our economy adapt, grow and thrive." Supporting schools that can offer both innovative programming, high achievement results, and are connected to industry and post-secondary make this project unique.

Capital Priorities

There are 2 capital priorities:

Description	Cost	Student capacity	Rank
Junior High/Senior High campus	$63.05 million to purchase land and construct a new facility.	1000	1
Upgrading for high school programming	$75,000 Completing upgrades to current space to house grades 10-12, including gym (dividers, sound dampening system and needed HVAC changes) to accommodate simultaneous high school timetabling; upgrading of science classroom to accommodate a standard high school chemistry lab.	n/a	2

Priority Rank 1: Junior High/Senior High Campus

Over the past few years, both EPSB and ECSD have sold off numerous surplus schools to the highest private bidders. In the case of EPSB, their real estate strategy specifically prohibits them from making surplus schools available to charter schools as outlined on Appendix A.

Given the relative lack of suitable office space that can be converted in the city, we need to pursue a land acquisition and new construction strategy. Given the confidential nature of these negotiations we will be providing an update under separate cover.

Priority Rank 2 – Upgrading facilities for high school operation.

Given the current state of project development we are planning on- and have committed to- maintain a Grade 7-12 configuration. This will allow students who enter grade 7 to transition to high school in the building while negotiations are finalized for a permanent 7-12 site.

Given the likely timelines required to secure a permanent high school, we are requesting funding as outlined above to enable the current building to properly accommodate high school programming.

Meeting Evaluation Criteria

Our submission meets the six key criteria for capital planning submissions outlined in Bill 73, the Infrastructure Accountability Act:

- **Align with government priorities and strategies:** Expanding charter school capacity delivers on the promise of Choice in Education for more students and addresses key areas of focus including STEM Education, promoting pathways to post-secondary, educating students about high in-demand careers, providing quality education as noted by academic achievement and high school completion, and supports future economic diversification.

- **Improve program delivery and services:** Our focus on collaborating with industry and post-secondary institutions means an enhanced level of education quality. Our strong academic program and unique options means that more students will have access to programming that is unique in Canada.

- **Enhance the resiliency of communities**: Young Albertans are one of our province's most valuable resources. Our new approaches to learning through STEM education and work- connected learning are ideal to motivate students to consider a broad range of in-demand skills. High-quality schools are critical to successful communities.

- **Foster economic activity and create jobs:** Our program is future ready and illuminates pathways to lucrative careers and entrepreneurial ventures.

- **Consider life cycle costs and return on investment:** A new, purpose building provides programming for decades. It's important to have modern spaces for modern, innovative, and forward looking programming we are offering.

- **Address health, safety, and compliance needs:** In past years, charter schools leased old, functionally obsolete schools declared surplus. Investing in a new facility meets the current health, safety, and wellness standards for schools.

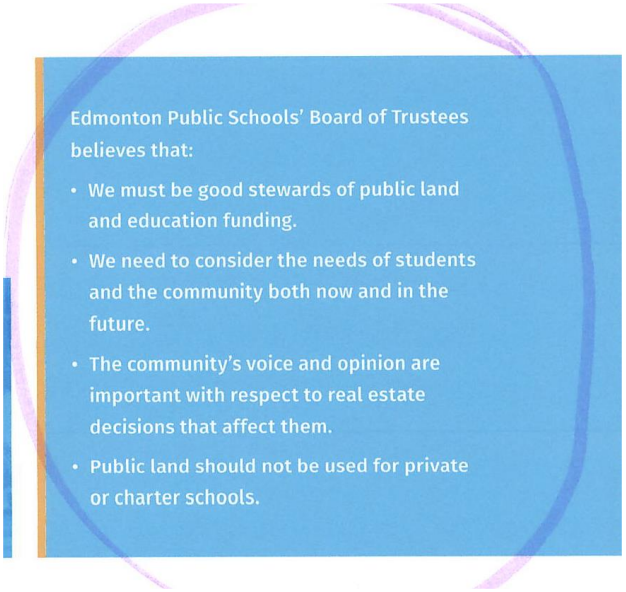
Alignment with Ministry of Treasury Board and Finance

The *Treasury Board and Finance Business Plan 2022-25*, notes that expenditures meet the litmus test of **"supporting Alberta's Recovery Plan and sector strategies, helping create an environment that attracts investment and job**

creators, removing barriers to job creation, and supporting economic diversification". Growth of our program presents an investment in the people, places and sectors that will enable Alberta to create robust economic activity.

Conclusion:

The most significant factor restricting the growth of charter schools is a lack of appropriate facilities. As a result, access to charter schools is severely limited and the promise of school choice remains unfulfilled. Collegiates and STEM Education are key directives in the Ministerial mandate letter – and by supporting our capital requests the Ministry can fulfill several important provincial policy directives.

Appendix A

Excerpt from Edmonton Public School Board Infrastructure Real Estate Strategy