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For Immediate Release

EICS uses Bill 1 funding to further reduce the financial burden on parents

Sherwood Park, AB – Elk Island Catholic Schools (EICS) is receiving \$474,000 during the 2017-2018 school year as part of the Government of Alberta’s mandate to reduce fees charged to parents as was announced in Budget 2017. As EICS has never charged fees for eligible transportation and all fees for Basic Education were eliminated in the 2016-17 school year, this new funding will provide EICS the ability to further ease the financial burden for our families.

EICS will be moving forward with the following initiatives during the upcoming school year:

- EICS will no longer require parents to supply basic school supplies for their students other than a backpack, gym attire and one-to-one technology device (as recommended for Grades 4-12).
- EICS will be supplying all basic required supplies to students, including, over the next 3 years, providing a graphing calculator while a student takes high school math courses.
- EICS will be eliminating noon hour supervision, agenda costs, locker fees and any other general fees that are not tied to a choice by parents.
- All remaining fees charged to parents, such as field trips, sports teams or enhanced programming with additional costs, will continue to be optional. Parents will be provided a choice for their child to participate in enhanced education services or extracurricular activities on a cost recovery basis.
- EICS will continue to provide monthly reports on all fees collected and spent at our public EICS Board meetings and also online.

“By effectively managing its resources and always keeping its priorities in mind, EICS will continue to provide an excellent, faith-based education while lessening the financial demands on families”, says Board Chair, Justine Wright. “EICS appreciates the financial support from the Alberta Government and is allocating it directly to supporting our parent community.”

The EICS Board of Trustees is currently working on policy to enshrine our support for reduction of financial costs to our families.

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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.

For more information or to request an interview with EICS Leadership, please contact:

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1. How can Elk Island Catholic Schools (EICS) afford to eliminate District Material Fees in 2016-17 and then provide school supplies and eliminate other fees in 2017-18?

In 2016-17, with the change to students bringing their own technology devices in grades 4-12, EICS saved over \$500,000 in leasing costs. These savings supported EICS educational technology supports plus they enabled EICS eliminate all Basic Education fees.

In 2017-18, the Division is receiving \$474,000 in targeted funding that is required to be used to reduce the financial burden on families. With basic education fees already eliminated, EICS is targeting the remainder of family financial costs that are not the result of parental choice.

2. Won't this change result in reduced budgets for schools?

Schools are being directly allocated \$170 per Early Childhood Services to Grade 3 student and \$135 for students in all other grades to replace the fees lost and to support school supply purchases.

3. How will schools order and get these supplies to classrooms?

EICS has posted a tender and is currently receiving proposals from interested supply vendors. EICS is seeking a vendor that will package its product by student and by classroom to ensure that distribution of the supplies is as easy as possible. When the successful vendor is selected, EICS will inform staff on the ordering and delivery process.

4. What is meant by the requirement that that parents are provided the opportunity to have their students receive a basic education at no cost?

Parents must be provided the opportunity to opt out of any activity that is an enhanced education service (ie curricular field trips, programs of choice, cultural activities and options programming) and that requires a fee to participate. Schools must ensure that it has at least one no cost option for parents to choose.

5. Why did EICS choose to allocate the majority of Bill 1 funding towards school supplies rather than other fees?

- Eliminating school supply lists will be an extremely beneficial service to parents both in convenience and financially.
- School supply lists cover items required for Basic Education and should be eliminated before those items that are parental choice in nature.
- School supplies are not covered in the division's waiver like other fees and are a hardship on families that may be struggling financially.
- Having school supplies as a budget item forces innovation and an honest assessment by schools if a supply is needed.
- EICS will achieve significant savings through volume purchasing.