

Increase capital funding for accessible playgrounds for all new, replacement or renovated Alberta publicly funded schools with K-9 programming.

Moved by: City of Spruce Grove
Seconded by: Village of Amisk

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta announced in June 2020 that any new school with K-6 programming will have funding for a playground included in their capital budgets;

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta provides grant funding of up to \$250,000 per school to support the construction of a playground for new or replacement schools; school communities that wish to exceed \$250,000 can use fundraising to supplement the project;

WHEREAS significant fundraising is often required above the grant funding, which often takes years to complete;

WHEREAS accessible playgrounds are built to accommodate children of all abilities enabling youth with or without disabilities, their parents, and caregivers to fully participate in all aspects of the playground;

WHEREAS accessible playgrounds require additional funding, above what non-accessible playgrounds cost;

WHEREAS there is no mechanism that mandates accessible school playgrounds;

WHEREAS school play time and playgrounds are vital to childhood development, which includes the development of gross motor skills, social interactions, and creativity; and

IT IS THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT Alberta Municipalities advocate to the Government of Alberta to increase capital funding for all new, replacement or renovated public schools with K-9 programming to enable the construction of accessible playgrounds to ensure that students with disabilities have equal development opportunities.

BACKGROUND:

- In 2021/2022, there were 745,770 K-12 students in Alberta with approximately 14% having a coded status that can be related to an identified disability.
- Municipalities across the province recognize the importance of creating welcoming, inclusive, and accessible communities. Several municipalities in Alberta have accessibility policies in place or under development; however, school playgrounds are provincially mandated, and therefore excluded from any municipal accessibility policies.

- This resolution aligns with Alberta Municipalities' Welcoming and Inclusive Communities (WIC) Initiative, which aims to help municipalities adapt to and celebrate the increasing diversity of Alberta's population. The WIC Initiative works to create communities where all residents and visitors enjoy a sense of belonging and where diversity adds to the social and economic vibrancy of the community, improving the quality of life for all resident, including people with disabilities.
- Currently, school boards are eligible for Government of Alberta grant funding for playgrounds either through Alberta Education or Alberta Arts, Culture and Status of Women; however, school authorities and their fundraising societies are not eligible to receive funding from both sources:
 - Alberta Education provides up to \$250,000 for playgrounds, through capital grant funding for new and replacement schools. Schools can use their fundraising societies to supplement playground construction builds that exceed \$250,000.
 - Alberta Arts, Culture and Status of Women provides grant funding through the Community Facility Enhancement Program (CFEP) of up to \$125,000 to support the construction of a school playground. Matching funds are required, and funding can be used for new, replacement or renovated schools.
- Alberta public sector entities have a history of advocating for additional capital school funding:
 - In 2014, the Town of Penhold put forward the [Provincial Support for School Development](#) resolution requesting "that the Government of Alberta, when developing new schools, fulfill the role of a contractor and share the costs associated with the development of the lands for the placement of a school structure".
 - In 2017, Edmonton Public School Board successfully advocated to the Government of Alberta for funding playgrounds to be committed to in the 2020 Budget proportional to the new schools announced. In June 2020, the Government of Alberta announced that any new school with K-6 programming would have funding for a playground included in their capital budgets.
- Alberta interest groups have a history of advocating for consistent accessibility standards:
 - The Alberta Advocate for Persons with Disabilities is working towards a proactive approach towards reducing barriers and improving opportunities for those with disabilities.
 - The Alberta Ability Network (AAN) is a collaboration of 170 organizations and community advocates located in Alberta, working together to address systemic barriers facing persons with disabilities, and has advocated to the province for mechanisms for enforcement of accessibility standards in the province.