



On December 2nd TAAPCS had the privilege of hosting a Zoom webinar with Education Minister Demetrios Nicolaidis. The session began at 6:15 p.m. with a brief introduction from TAAPCS President Dee-Ann Evans who introduced the Minister and Sadiq Valliani of Alberta Classical Academy who hosted the Q&A with the Minister. We had 700 registrations and about 400 people at any time during the event. This is a short summary:

The Minister began by thanking TAAPCS for the hard work, committed to answering as many questions as possible and emphasizing the government's commitment to choice in education generally and specifically to Public Charter Schools.

As part of the Q&A the Minister confirmed there isn't any schedule as to how many of the 12,500 public charter school spaces will be given to new or existing schools. Each application will be judged on its merits. Funding is meant to create new spaces but improving existing spaces is also important.

In response to a question on getting more teachers the Minister outlined actions with school boards and universities to ensure we have more trained teachers throughout the system.

In response to a question on increasing operating dollars the Minister commented on actions to date and committed to continuing to find solutions.

The Minister reassured us that existing school boards need to make available their underused schools where it makes sense to become a charter. In a later answer he spoke to recent legislation that requires public buildings to come back to the province for disposition.

In response to a question on a voucher system the Minister confirmed that in our system dollars do follow students within the public system.

In response to a question on Alberta's per student funding being lower than the rest of Canada the Minister shared that those reports don't include the recent announcements of government.

Regarding a question about why the ATA always refers to us as "private" the Minister stated that this was not his government's view.

Regarding bussing times, the Minister spoke to understanding and continuing to work for solutions.

The Minister praised the efforts for the Calgary Charter Hub and unique approaches to capital. He recognized the dramatic increase in people coming to Alberta and the challenge that presents.

All member schools of TAAPCS were invited to participate in what we hope will be the first of a series of such sessions. We thank all member schools for your efforts to get parents more involved and participate in these initiatives.

The dramatic increase in capital funding by the government for all Alberta students is greatly appreciated.