

NEWS RELEASE

Increasing number of Albertans choosing independent schools over government schools

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For Immediate Release

CALGARY—Enrolment at independent schools in Alberta—as a share of total enrolment—increased over a recent 19-year period, while the share of enrolment in government schools declined, according to a new study released today by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan Canadian public policy think-tank.

“For their children’s education, parents in Alberta are increasingly choosing options outside the government school system,” said Michael Zwaagstra, senior fellow with the Fraser Institute and co-author of *Where Our Students Are Educated: Measuring Student Enrolment in Canada, 2022*.

The study finds that as a share of all K-12 students, enrolment in independent schools increased in all provinces and decreased for public schools everywhere from 2000/01 to 2019/20, the most recent year of available comparable data.

In Alberta, independent school enrolment as a share of total enrolment increased from 4.1 per cent to 4.3 per cent during the 19-year period.

Over the same time, enrolment in government schools, as a share of total enrolment, declined from 94.6 per cent to 93.8 per cent.

Critically, Alberta is the only province where the population of school-aged children increased over that period.

Alberta—along with the other three western provinces and Quebec—partially fund the operating costs of independent schools.

Alberta is also the only province with charter schools, which in 2019/20 accounted for 1.4 per cent of total enrolment.

And Alberta is also one of only three provinces that provides Catholic education in the government system, which in 2019/20 was 23.7 per cent of total enrolment.

“While education is funded and delivered differently across the provinces, the evidence is clear—parents in Alberta are increasingly looking to independent schools for more choice in how their children are educated,” said Zwaagstra.

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