

ALBERTANS ARE CONCERNED ABOUT PUBLIC EDUCATION

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Three-quarters (76%) of Albertans agree that “The Government should fund public education to ensure that all kindergarten to Grade 3 classes in Alberta have fewer than 17 students per teacher”

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Ipsos Reid



The Alberta Teachers' Association

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Edmonton, AB – According to a recent survey conducted by Ipsos-Reid on behalf of the Alberta Teachers’ Association (ATA), when it comes to funding, 70% of Albertans say that the Alberta Government is currently spending “not enough” on public education. Regarding class size, nine-in-ten (90%) Albertans believe that class size makes a big difference in the quality of education delivered at public schools. As such, 76% of Albertans believe the Alberta Government should fund public education so that there are fewer than 17 students per teacher for kindergarten to Grade 3 classes.

These are the findings of an Ipsos-Reid poll conducted on behalf of the Alberta Teachers' Association between May 20th and May 25th, 2004. The poll is based on a randomly selected sample of 800 adult Albertans. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within ± 3.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult Alberta population been polled. The margin of error will be larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population. These data were statistically weighted to ensure the sample's regional and age/sex composition reflects that of the actual Alberta population according to the 2001 Census.

70% of Albertans say that the Alberta government is currently spending “not enough” on public education

Currently, seven-in-ten (70%) Albertans believe the provincial government is currently spending “not enough” on public education. Another 22% believe the provincial government is spending the “right amount” and 5% say they are spending “too much” on public education in the province.

- Women (78%) are more likely than men (62%) to say The Alberta Government is not spending enough on public education in the province.
- Albertans between the ages of 35 and 54 (74%) are more likely to remark that the provincial government is currently spending “not enough” on Alberta’s public education system than are their older cohorts (63% among those aged 55 years and older).

When asked who is primarily to blame for the recent financial difficulties of Alberta’s school boards, over half (56%) of all Albertans interviewed point fingers at “The Government of Alberta”. Another 21% of Albertans think “The school boards” themselves are to blame, while just under one-in-ten (9%) Albertans believe “school teachers” are to blame. Further, 8% feel that “The Government of Alberta”, “the school boards” and “school teachers”, are all to blame for causing the financial difficulties facing school boards in the province. Finally, 2% of Albertans feel “none of the above” mentioned groups are to blame, while 4% are unsure of who is to blame.

Respondents more likely to place the blame for school boards’ financial difficulties on “The Government of Alberta” include:

- Women;
- Younger Albertans (aged 18 to 34).

Albertans more likely to blame “The school boards” include:

- Men;
- Albertans aged 55 years and older;
- Calgarians.

Finally, those more likely to blame “school teachers” include:

- Men.

All of this relates to the fact that Albertans place a high level of importance on education. Albertans were asked to rate the importance of a number of issues facing Alberta these days. Of the issues asked, public education (kindergarten to Grade 12) paralleled the environment (95% for each) as an issue Albertans found important. These issues rank below healthcare (99%), but above infrastructure (88%). When specifically looking at the importance of public education, 83% of Albertans feel this issue is “very important” and 13% feel it is “somewhat important”. Only 4% of Albertans feel public education is not important (3% “not very important” and 1% “not at all important”).

- Albertans aged 18 to 34 years old (99%) are much more likely to say public education is important than are their older cohorts (96% among 35 to 54 year olds and 93% among those aged 55 years and older).

90% of Albertans agree that “class size makes a big difference in the quality of education delivered at public schools”

Most Albertans (90%) agree class size makes a big difference in the quality of education delivered at public schools in the province. A majority (68%) “strongly agree” with this statement and two-in-ten (21%) “moderately agree”. On the other hand, one-in-ten (10%) disagree with the notion that class size makes a big difference in the quality of education delivered at public schools (7% “moderately disagree” and 3% “strongly disagree”).

- Women (94%) are more likely than men (86%) to agree class size makes a big difference in the quality of education delivered at public schools.
- Agreement with this statement tends to decline with age (93% agree among those aged 18-34 years, 91% agree among those aged 35-54 years, and 84% agree among those aged 55 years and older).

Three-quarters (76%) of Albertans believe that “The Government should fund public education to ensure that all kindergarten to Grade 3 classes in Alberta have fewer than 17 students per teacher”.

Just over three quarters (76%) of Albertans agree that “the provincial government” should fund public education to ensure that all kindergarten to Grade 3 classes have fewer than 17 students per teacher” (47% “strongly agree” and 29% “moderately agree”). The remaining 23% of Albertans disagree with this statement (9% “strongly disagree”, 14% “moderately disagree”).

- Women (83%) are more likely than men (70%) to agree that The Government of Alberta should provide funds to ensure there are fewer than 17 students per teacher for kindergarten to Grade 3 classes.
- Agreement with this statement tends to decline with age (83% agree among those aged 18-34 years, 77% agree among those aged 35-54 years, and 67% agree among those aged 55 years and older).

For more information on this news release, please contact:

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