

Reply to Advanced Education, Strategic and Business Services (July 3, 2025)
Cc: The Honourable Peter Guthrie, MLA for Airdrie-Cochrane

To the Office of Strategic and Business Services,

Thank you for your recent email in response to my communication with [REDACTED] of Foundational Learning. The additional information is appreciated, and the further acknowledgement of the situation at hand.

While you have explained that the Post-secondary Learning Act and Bow Valley College's mandate do not prevent the closure of the School of Global Access, it is unclear how this can be possible. You suggest that the college is actually meeting its mandate of offering English as an Additional Language through one of their "broad range of programs". If you are referring to the four English for Academic Purposes classes that still exist, it is easy to argue that offering these classes alone is not sufficient to meet the mandate. The decision to close the SGA contradicts the spirit of a comprehensive community college. Foundational programs like English language learning are essential, not expendable. Shutting down the SGA—without transparent consultation or clear contingency—undermines newcomer support and the college's role in fostering equitable access to education, careers, and successful integration into the community.

While the governance structure outlined under APAGA and the PSLA grants boards operational authority, you also indicated that it places a clear responsibility on the Minister to monitor whether institutions act within their mandates. The closure of this school, without adequate alternatives or meaningful consultation, raises serious questions about whether the college is still fulfilling its mandate—and whether ministerial oversight has been sufficiently exercised.

Although the Ministry claims not to direct how institutions fulfill their stewardship responsibilities, the Minister's authority is far from passive. *By appointing the majority of Bow Valley College's board and holding the power to remove them, the Minister is ultimately accountable for the direction the college takes.* Choosing not to intervene in the closure of the School of Global Access—despite its critical role in foundational learning and newcomer integration—is not neutrality; it is tacit approval. Inaction, in this case, signals that the Minister supports the dismantling of southern Alberta's largest ESL program, in Calgary's perennial community college.

Additionally, if the Minister's authority is as passive as suggested, it raises a fundamental question: Why does the mandate even exist? If the Minister of Advanced Education is powerless—or unwilling—to intervene when a vital public program is dismantled, then what distinguishes Bow Valley College as an Alberta Public Agency? A mandate is established so that public agencies can deliver on priorities the government believes reflect the expectations and values of its citizens—the taxpayers. In this context, over 1,000 petition signers believe that this mandate is not being met.

Non-action by the Ministry of Advanced Education suggests complacency in the midst of a crisis. ESL education is at a critical juncture, and our provincial government has a chance to flex the Alberta Advantage—not just as an immigration strategy, but as a commitment to real opportunity. This is a moment to show leadership, support, and dedication to newcomer integration. I remain optimistic that with the Ministry's ingenuity and resolve, this decision can be reconsidered. Reopening the School of Global Access would restore critical language programming and reaffirm Bow Valley College's role as a champion of newcomer success. It would be a meaningful step toward a more inclusive, opportunity-driven Alberta—boosting economic growth, reducing welfare reliance, and unlocking the full potential of immigrant communities.

Finally, my MLA, the Honourable Peter Guthrie, has requested a meeting on my behalf with the Honourable Myles McDougall, Minister of Advanced Education. While I am appreciative of our recent correspondence, I am still respectfully requesting a meeting with him, and look forward to the opportunity to present our petition signed by over 1,000 concerned members of the community.

Thank you again for your time and for thoughtfully considering my comments. I genuinely appreciate the willingness of the Ministry of Advanced Education to engage in this dialogue, and the time taken to correspond with me.

Regards,

Janice McCrimmon
Advocacy Coordinator, Stand Up for ESL