



The Alberta Teachers' Association

Great teachers, great schools: Supporting and enhancing teachers' professional practice

**Association Response to the Recommendations of
the Task Force for Teaching Excellence**

Association Proposed Directions

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Introduction

The Task Force for Teaching Excellence was established by Education Minister Jeff Johnson ostensibly to “... make recommendations on how we can better support Alberta’s teachers to ensure that every student has the best chance at success.” This is a noble objective and one that should have engaged the support of teachers and their professional organization, the Alberta Teachers’ Association.

Unfortunately, the Association was excluded from the outset from substantive participation in the task force and denied meaningful opportunities to bring relevant information and insights that might have informed the task force’s deliberations and conclusions. The deliberate decision to not engage the Association is a departure from previous practice, most notably, the *Inspiring Education* consultations undertaken by a previous minister. As might be expected, this decision coupled with a flawed consultation process, is reflected in the product of the task force, a report that is shot through with errors of fact, misrepresentations and omissions. Its recommendations, if implemented in their entirety, would effectively destroy a culture of education that has been established over decades and that has contributed significantly to the success of what even the task force observes is “a very strong education system” and one that “has served our province and its students very well.”

As a result, teachers and supporters of public education in Alberta now must seek to undo the damage to the profession and public confidence caused by the task force and by the cynical and opportunistic manner in which its recommendations have been promoted by the Minister. It would be very simple, and perhaps more honest, to simply dismiss the task force as incompetent or malicious and then refuse to legitimize its efforts by providing a response. But this is not the direction that teachers have given to their Association. Instead, at the Association’s 97th Annual Representative Assembly in Calgary on the Victoria Day long weekend, 417 elected teacher representatives from across the province voted unanimously to support Resolution 3-57/14 which expressed the desire that “the Alberta Teachers’ Association, where possible, develop constructive responses to the recommendations of the Task Force for Teaching Excellence and commence a dialogue with the Government of Alberta.”

The Annual Representative Assembly also reiterated in a series of resolutions, the core guiding principles that would shape the Association’s response, directing the Association to:

- ... urge the Government of Alberta to unequivocally affirm its intention to maintain responsibility for professional conduct and practice review with the Alberta Teachers’ Association (Resolution 3-51/14—carried unanimously);
- ... urge the Government of Alberta to unequivocally affirm its intention to maintain the structure and powers of Board of Reference as they currently exist,

- unless proposed changes are approved by the Alberta Teachers' Association (Resolution 3-52/14—carried unanimously);
- ... urge the Government of Alberta to unequivocally affirm its intention to maintain the joint professional and union structure of the Alberta Teachers' Association and to obtain the approval of the Association for any proposed changes affecting its structure and powers (Resolution 3-53/14—carried unanimously);
- ... urge the Government of Alberta to recognize that school administrators are, first and foremost, instructional leaders and unequivocally affirm its intention to maintain school administrators as full, active members of the Alberta Teachers' Association (Resolution 3-54/14—carried unanimously);
- ... reaffirm its commitment to the people of Alberta to continue its efforts to improve teaching in Alberta and to protect the public interest by policing the conduct and competence of its members, as outlined in the *Teaching Profession Act* (Resolution 3-55/14—carried unanimously); and
- ... unequivocally reject cyclical teacher evaluation, removal of professional growth planning from teachers and recertification schemes outlined by the Task Force for Teaching Excellence (Resolution 3-56/14—carried, 416-1).

The response and recommendations that follow respect the content and spirit of these resolutions as well as longstanding Association policy. Teachers believe that there are opportunities to respond to general concerns raised in the task force report and, in the process, chart a path forward for improving public education in Alberta.

Frankly, the willingness and ability of the Minister to consider genuinely and respond constructively to the content of this response is an open question. Delegates to the Annual Representative Assembly expressed their skepticism in a resolution stating “that the teachers of Alberta have lost confidence in the current Minister of Education.” But this submission, and particularly the directions for improvement it contains, are not intended solely, or even primarily, for the Minister or his task force. They are ultimately directed to teachers, parents and the numerous supporters of public education. They are also directed toward actually achieving the task force’s original purpose, “supporting Alberta’s teachers to ensure that every student has the best chance at success.”

What do Albertans believe about teaching excellence?

It is difficult to overstate the degree to which the Alberta public supports teachers and the public education system. The department's own annual surveys have consistently reported very high levels of satisfaction among all stakeholders with the performance of the province's schools and teachers. The most recent of these surveys currently available was conducted from mid-January to early March 2013 by CCI Research Inc. using a random sampling approach that yielded results with a margin of error ranging between +/- 3.1 to 4.2 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. The survey (available online at <http://education.alberta.ca/media/7726582/surveysummaryreport2013.pdf>) revealed that:

- all the principals (100%) and a high proportion of students (99%), school board trustees (97%), teachers (96%), parents (K–12: 90%, severe special needs: 84%), and the public (77%) were satisfied with the quality of education at schools; and,
- a high proportion of principals (99%), teachers (97%), school board trustees (97%), students (95%), and parents (K–12: 87%, severe special needs: 89%) were satisfied with the quality of teaching at schools.

In fact, the area where stakeholders were most dissatisfied involved the responsiveness of the Ministry:

- a low proportion of teachers (37%), parents (K–12: 50%, severe special needs: 59%), the public (42%), school board trustees (69%), and principals (63%) were satisfied that their input into the education of students is considered by Alberta Education.

In an effort to gauge public opinion regarding the issues being raised by the task force and in response to concerns being raised about the task force's own "consultation" process, the Association contracted Environics Research Group to conduct a scientific opinion poll of a randomly selected and representative sample of Albertans on issues of teacher excellence. The resulting January 2014 report was based on a telephone interviews conducted with 806 adult Albertans between 2014 01 13–24. The margin of error of the survey is +/- 3.4 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Environics integrated the results of the January 2014 survey with the results of previous surveys that had been conducted with similar rigor (noted below), to provide insights into Albertans' views on several aspects of public education:

On teaching excellence:

- Seven in ten (69%) Albertans believe teachers have a harder time providing high quality education now than in the past (Environics, May 2011);
- Top factors Albertans say make a teacher's job challenging (unprompted): high class size/ratio – 52%; lack of resources or support – 43%; lack of discipline or authority – 34%; high diversity in the classroom – 13% (Environics, January 2014);

- 79% of Albertans think availability of resources and learning supports are important factors affecting education quality (Environics, February 2013);
- 75% of Albertans think the number of students in a class is an important factor affecting education quality (Environics, February 2013); and,
- 60% of Albertans feel that class sizes in Alberta’s schools are too large (Environics, January 2014).

On principals:

- Six in ten Albertans think that principals have the right amount of authority currently. Two in ten think they should have more authority (Environics, January 2014); and,
- 70% of Albertans feel that principals should remain part of the teachers’ association versus only 19% who feel they should not (Environics, January 2014).

On the Association’s professional regulatory functions:

- 79% of Albertans think the Association should have at least as many professional functions as they do now—47% say maintain current functions, 32% say more professional functions for the Association (Environics, January 2014); and
- 11% of Albertans think the Association should have fewer professional functions (Environics, January 2014).

On teacher certification:

- 70% of Albertans feel that current requirements about who is authorised to teach is about right; 10% believe that those requirements are not strict enough (Environics, January 2014).

On teacher conduct:

- 27% of Albertans expressed familiarity with the process used to regulate teacher conduct (Environics, January 2014);
- 57% of Albertans are at least somewhat confident that complaints about teacher conduct are addressed effectively (Environics, January 2014); and
- 75% of those who cite familiarity with the processes also say they are confident in it (Environics, January 2014).

On teacher competency:

- Only 22% of Albertans expressed some familiarity with current processes in place to regulate teacher competency (Environics, January 2014);
- 47% of Albertans are at least somewhat confident that complaints about teacher competency are addressed effectively (Environics, January 2014); but,
- among people who are familiar with the processes, the level of confidence rises to 58% (Environics, January 2014).

Environics' data reveals strengths and also opportunities for substantive improvement. It also points to the need to improve public understanding of some aspects of the public education system. Generally though, these results stand in stark contrast to those produced through the task force's consultation process. Why would this difference exist?

Certainly a large part of the answer lies in with methodology used in the task force's consultation process and particularly its online survey. Unlike the random stratified sample used by Environics, the participants in the task force's consultation processes are self-selected. While the task force, and its contractor Leger—The Research Intelligence Group, purports that “the size and composition of the sample is sufficient to allow for valid and meaningful statistical analysis of finding for both the total overall sample as well as specific subgroups within the sample,” (p102ff) this is simply not the case. The participant group cannot be construed as constituting a random or representative sample and it is notable that no margin of error is reported for the online survey, because absent such a sample, no margin of error *can* be reported.

It should also be noted that while the task force likes to report that 3,000 Albertans participated in its consultations, it is clear that much double counting is taking place. A substantial portion of those who participated in a bulletin board, or in regional consultations, were also likely to have participated in the online survey. Compounding the problem is the drop-off rate. Anecdotal reports suggest that participation in the bulletin boards dropped off dramatically over time and it is unclear how many of the individuals who began to respond to the online survey continued through to the end.

Apart from these technical concerns is the tendency of the task force report to torque the evidence cited in support of its conclusions and to withhold relevant contextual information in a way that would mislead the typical reader. Examples of this are noted in the critique of the recommendations contained in the next section of the report.

Questions concerning the independence of the task force and the role of the minister

The Minister of Education and the chair of the task force have both claimed that the deliberations of the task force were undertaken independently of ministerial or departmental direction and that the department's role was limited to undertaking research at the task force's behest. Putting aside the absurd notion that a task force with four MLAs would be independent of Government, this claim is undermined by information that has come to light concerning the origins of the task force and by the manner in which the task force's report has been rolled out.

The opening sentence of the report states that the Minister of Education "announced the formation of a Task Force for Teaching Excellence (Task Force) on September 11, 2013." It may be strictly true that the announcement was made on that date, however reliable information suggests that the task force was already active months before the announcement, a fact that is not acknowledged in the report. Furthermore, the Minister of Education has compromised any possibility that he could be perceived as a critical recipient and impartial reviewer of task force recommendations by his actions and statements both immediately before and since the release of the report. The Minister provided summaries and prejudicial comments to selected media outlets and at least one interest group several days prior to the public release of the report on condition that they not seek a response from the Association. Most recently, Minister Johnson has made statements about how he plans to respond to task force recommendations before having had an opportunity to review this or any other submission. In particular, he has made disingenuous and inflammatory comments about specific professional conduct cases and about the Association's professional regulatory processes, comments that betray a willful ignorance of the serious issues that are now under review.

The Association believes that the task force's processes and relationship with the Minister and department are suspect and should be subject to scrutiny. Accordingly, the Association has launched a request for information from Alberta Education and from other public bodies under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. The department has requested and received a 30 day extension on providing the documentation requested and so this information is not available to inform this submission.

Conclusion

There is a saying in the field of change management that “a crisis is a terrible thing to waste.” The cynical corollary is “and if there isn’t a crisis, create one.”

It appears that the task force and the Minister of Education have decided to manufacture a crisis in order to promote an agenda that includes several ill-considered proposals that would, if implemented, undermine public education in Alberta. What is particularly sad is that it never seems to have occurred to those guiding the formation and work of the task force that there was a more effective alternative approach: active collaboration with the Alberta Teachers’ Association. This failure of leadership and process has damaged public education, the profession and the Government.

Our collective responsibility now is to try to limit and then undo this damage. In the pages that follow, the Association presents an analysis and critique of specific task force recommendations and the assumptions underlying them. As well, the Association is proposing approaches and reforms that would serve to enhance teacher excellence and contribute to public assurance without diminishing the profession or attacking teachers.



Response of the Alberta Teachers' Association to the recommendations of the task force for teaching excellence

The Association's response to each of the 25 recommendations of the Task Force for Teaching Excellence follows.

1

RECOMMENDATION 1: TEACHING PRACTICE STANDARDS

That the Teaching Quality Standard be revised to align with Inspiring Education and with the recommendations of this report. The Task Force further recommends that the Teaching Quality Standard be framed by the ability to achieve and maintain teaching excellence.

The Association does not concur with this recommendation as proposed, as it ties practice standards to a particular vision, *Inspiring Education*, that appears to currently lack social license and that remains subject to varying interpretations. The Association does agree that the Teaching Quality Standard should be revised to reflect current research on fundamental and enduring aspects of teaching practice, including excellence in teaching. The Association is willing to work with the Ministry to develop a revised Teaching Quality Standard for members of the teaching profession.

2

RECOMMENDATION 2: SCHOOL LEADER PRACTICE STANDARDS

That the Ministry of Education adopt practice standards for school leaders.

The Association supports the development of professional practice standards for school leaders reflecting current research on school and instructional leadership, including excellence in school and instructional leadership.

It should be noted that the Alberta School Leadership Framework was carefully developed and endorsed by education partners. The framework includes competencies, and could be the basis for a discussion about a professional practice standard. The Association is willing to work with the Ministry to develop professional practice standards for members of the teaching profession who are school leaders.

3

RECOMMENDATION 3: DISTRICT LEADER PRACTICE STANDARDS

That the Ministry of Education adopt practice standards for district leaders.

The Association supports the development of professional practice standards for district leaders. However, the Association defines "district leaders" to be broader than the task force's definition, which limited this cohort to superintendents,

associate superintendents and assistant superintendents. The Association believes that this cohort should include all certificate holders employed by a school authority whose role does not include teaching or school leadership. If the cohort is limited to superintendents, associate superintendents and assistant superintendents, there will be many certificate holders employed by school authorities for whom there are no practice standards. The Association is willing to work with the Ministry to develop professional practice standards for members of the teaching profession who are district leaders.

4

RECOMMENDATION 4: REVIEW OF PRACTICE STANDARDS

That the standards for teachers, school leaders and district leaders be reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

The Association agrees that professional practice standards should be reviewed and updated from time to time. While the task force has in mind a five-year revision cycle, that is likely too optimistic and impractical. Frequent revisions may also have the unintended consequence of defining practice standards in light of current fads in education rather than fundamental and enduring aspects of sound teaching practice.

5

RECOMMENDATION 5: ADMISSION TO TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS

That Alberta's teacher preparation programs be encouraged to look beyond grades, when making decisions, to consider other relevant criteria in the spirit of Inspiring Education.

While the Association accepts that volunteer activities relating to teaching or care of children may be relevant in admission decisions, the Association does not accept that academic performance expectations should be lowered. It is simplistic to believe, as the task force appears to do, that excellence in teaching is more derived from patience or compassion than academic excellence. In addition, attracting the “best and the brightest” to any profession depends directly on the individual’s perception of the attractiveness of the profession as a career choice that is both challenging and prestigious. Academic standards need to remain high in the teaching profession.

The aim of recruitment is to provide adequate numbers of capable teacher candidates while the aim of selection is to ensure that only competent teachers reach the classrooms. Since the status of the profession and the quality of education are affected by the quality of entrants, recruitment and selection are very important factors. There are promising practices to consider in other jurisdictions (Finland, Singapore) where a broader range of admission criteria are considered in program admission, however these are part of a system-wide focus on supporting academic

excellence and programs which further develop the profession in the early years of practice. Such admission processes are funded and supported by governments committed to strategically advancing the teaching profession. Such approaches require comprehensive planning and collaboration with the teaching profession and other education partners and certainly cannot be done on an ad hoc basis nor with a singular focus on tweaking admission criteria.

6

RECOMMENDATION 6: ALIGNMENT OF TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS WITH *INSPIRING EDUCATION*

That the Ministry facilitate an annual discussion among Alberta's teacher preparation institutions on alignment of their programs with Inspiring Education, including vision, values, principles and policy shifts.

Consistent with their broad mandate to serve the community in a global context, narrowing the focus of Alberta's world-class teacher preparation programs to the Government's *Inspiring Education* initiative is both parochial and unnecessary, and facilitation of an annual meeting should not be mandated. The deans, through their own organization, meet regularly and can discuss such matters. The Ministry also has the authority to deal with issues that may be apparent in any teacher preparation program, including through existing semi-annual meetings of education partners on teaching quality and related issues.

7

RECOMMENDATION 7: ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS TO TEACHING AND LETTERS OF AUTHORITY

To bring people with diversity of skills, expertise and background into Alberta classrooms:

7.1 That alternate pathways to teaching certification be developed for those in specialized areas of instruction including the trades, fine arts and other professions.

7.2 That the use of Letters of Authority be revised to increase their effectiveness and to facilitate the employment of non-certified instructors in an area of specialization. The Task Force further recommends that Letters of Authority be in force for a period appropriate to the circumstance, and the nature of practice supervision of those teaching under a Letter of Authority be at the discretion of the principal who would be responsible for ensuring an appropriate level of supervision.

The notion that the students' interest is well served, and that teacher excellence may be achieved, by admitting would-be teachers to the profession without completion of a teacher preparation program is curious to say the least. A major theme of the report is the desire for greater assurance, but the task force proposes in this section to dramatically reduce assurance.

The present structure allows a school authority to employ an individual who has certain expertise, eg, an automotives journeyman, on a letter of authority with a requirement that the individual continue their teacher preparation program while instructing under an enhanced supervision model by a member of the profession. The letter of authority has a clear time limitation.

In order to remain in the teaching profession, a would-be teacher working under a letter of authority has to complete qualifications similar to other certificated teachers. Essentially, the approach being used at the present time provides individuals opportunities in areas of shortage for long-term stability in employment with professional status achieved through the completion of teacher preparation program requirements over time.

The task force recommendation opens the door to US-style alternative programs of teacher preparation. If excellence is to be assured, one would assume that higher, rather than lower, standards should be established. The Association cannot support alternative pathways that would replace current teacher preparation models and provide entry to the classroom for individuals based on their competence in fields other than teaching. A prospective fine arts teacher, in the midst of their Bachelor of Education degree, will especially be concerned by the recommendation, given that the task force wants to provide alternative pathways for artists to teach.

Remarkably, the component of the degree that provides specific preparation to teach is not seen to be valuable by the task force, which only seems to accept value in the content preparation. The task force seems to believe that a music major who has no teacher preparation may be more valuable than a music education student who does. Given the task force's mantra "in every classroom, an excellent teacher", the mantra in this section is reduced to "in every fine arts classroom, a-content-provider-who-might-be-able-to-teach".

So while the trend of Alberta and internationally has been to increase the base qualifications required to teach (Finland, for example, requires a Master's degree to teach), the task force actually proposes to reduce qualifications in areas where there is a sufficient supply of teachers because "without the assistance of outside experts, some students may not have access to a full range of learning opportunities." In the Association's view, "outside experts" should augment, not replace, certificated teachers. The Association is also concerned that alternative pathways would be permitted in fine arts and "other professions" when there is no shortage of qualified certificated teachers today. The task force recommendation opens the door to non-teachers becoming principals or superintendents, and the Association cannot accept such a direction.

In sum, the Association supports alternative routes to teacher certification where there are teacher shortages and is willing to work with government and teacher preparation institutions to further define appropriate programs. The Bridging to Certification program (and Reverse Bridging) is an appropriate model, and funding should be restored to this program so it can actually fulfill a function that is very badly needed. Necessary components of teacher preparation should not be

sacrificed but can be completed over time while undertaking supervised practice. The Association does not favour alternative routes to teacher certification in content areas where there are no teacher shortages. Where the *Program of Studies* would be appropriately augmented by a content specialist, funding should be provided to hire a content specialist to join with the certificated teacher as a guest speaker or for the relevant portion of the program. Such augmentation is entirely parallel to a field trip in nature, except the “field trip” comes to the classroom.

8

RECOMMENDATION 8: PRACTICUMS

That practicums in Alberta’s teacher preparation programs:

8.1 Provide exposure to the field of teaching in the first year, or prior to entering a program such that participants can discern their suitability for a career in teaching, and provide context for their theory-based studies.

8.2 Provide high-quality opportunities throughout (where possible in each year of the program) with an extension beyond the current minimum of 10 weeks, leading to greater professional independence and awareness.

The Association disagrees with this recommendation. Association policy continues to advocate for a four-year Bachelor of Education degree program with a semester-equivalent practicum as a minimum standard sufficient for certification requirements. That said, the Association does agree with the observations about scheduling an early practicum to allow students to assess their suitability for the profession. This has been the norm at the University of Lethbridge Faculty of Education since 1975.

Adding an extended additional practicum to the minimum certification teacher preparation program requirements would create at least an additional year of teacher education and would lead to the restructuring of existing programs. Expanding teacher preparation programs across the province (ie, moving to a minimum of five or six years of teacher education) would take substantial additional resources. It would also have the potential to discourage prospective teachers who may make other choices given the costs of an additional year of university.

9

RECOMMENDATION 9: INTERNSHIPS/ARTICLING

That the Ministry consider the introduction of a mandatory one-year paid internship/articling program for all beginning teachers on completion of a teacher preparation program, with a focus on accelerating the development of the competencies included in the Teaching Quality Standard and associated with excellence in teaching.

The Association agrees with this recommendation, but there are some significant caveats. First, it is very important that the program is a genuine internship, and not

a program that develops skills parallel to the skills of teachers' assistants. Second, the purpose of the program is to further develop professional practice of beginning teachers, not to evaluate them.

There has been work done on a provincial internship program before, but funding was not available to proceed. The program devised by the Ministry, in conjunction with the education partners, called for a reduced load for beginning teachers (and full salary), and also a reduced load for mentor teachers. Combined, the release was in the range of .25 FTE.

A provincial curriculum should be developed for this program and it should be run in conjunction with teacher preparation institutions. Since it is a bridge between the study of education within the faculty of education and fully responsible professional practice, it is important to take advantage of faculty resources. The year also needs to be considered a year of teaching experience, and contribute to meeting the requirements for a continuous contract. It also needs to be recognized as a year of teaching experience toward the two years of successful experience required to receive a permanent teaching certificate.

10 **RECOMMENDATION 10: MENTORSHIP**

That a provincewide mentorship framework be introduced to support teachers in the first three-to-five years of their career. While the program structure should be consistent across the province, it also needs to accommodate local contexts.

The Association supports a provincewide mentorship program. It is important that the program be focused on the advancement of the teacher's professional practice, not on summative evaluation for the purpose of making an employment decision. The goal is to help young teachers become even better teachers, and this must be done in an atmosphere of trust and support. A standard provincial program is appropriate to achieve this goal. To be successful, such a program needs to be developed collaboratively and time must be provided to both the mentors and the protégés.

11 **RECOMMENDATION 11: TEACHER'S ANNUAL PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PLAN**

That the Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy be revised such that:

The teacher's annual professional learning and growth plan (currently referred to as the Professional Growth Plan):

- is jointly developed with the principal or designate*
- is aligned with the goals of the school, the district, and the community*
- demonstrates professional growth, currency, and competency, leading to teaching excellence.*

The plan will include a process through which regular feedback is provided to the teacher on his or her progress in achieving the plan goals and a year-end written evaluation of the teacher's plan by the principal or designate.

The recommendation dramatically changes the Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy, adding a whole new layer of unnecessary bureaucracy to the system. At the present time, the growth plan requires teachers, each year, to focus on how they can become better teachers based on a provincial practice standard. Control of the plan rests with the teacher who, as a self-actualized professional, is in the best position to identify professional learning needs. While the plan is self-directed, the principal is a key player and the growth plan works best when there is a very good dialogue between the principal and the teacher and a clear focus on growth. The teacher is not evaluated on the outcome—but the teacher is expected to complete a growth plan and to work at its implementation.

The proposal would remove professional autonomy and impose the inauthentic growth expectations of others on a teacher's professional practice (an excellent teacher would have to become more excellent!). The existing growth plan concept assumes a professional and collegial model, not a management-labour model, where a teacher's learning goals are imposed by others. A professional and collegial model provides for risk-taking—identifying learning goals that would genuinely improve practice. If, as proposed by the task force, teachers are going to be evaluated on growth, they will not choose targets or outcomes that might be particularly challenging, but at which they might fail. The potential for real and meaningful growth is therefore fundamentally compromised.

In addition, the task force is proposing that the principal be required to jointly develop a growth plan with the teacher, provide regular feedback through the year and provide a year-end written evaluation of the teacher's growth plan. This is a huge workload addition for principals. The present structure is intensive, but the proposed structure will consume an enormous volume of time. Regular feedback sessions require ongoing assessment activity by the principal and a formal year-end written evaluation for each teacher is a time-consuming task. Substantial additional resources will be required to provide for this proposal and would be much better spent on teaching supports and supports in the learning environment.

The Association strongly supports the existing Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy. The Association is willing to reinforce the importance of the growth plan with members and deliver workshops across the province on the development of effective plans and the importance of growth plans. Dedicated time from the province to support teachers and principals in the development and completion of growth plans would also be very constructive.

12

RECOMMENDATION 12: RECOGNIZING AND MOTIVATING TEACHERS

That the Ministry of Education create and administer a new provincial designation to recognize teachers who consistently demonstrate teaching excellence and mastery according to the Teaching Quality Standard. These individuals would be invited to contribute their expertise in areas such as:

- mentorship of other teachers*
- leadership in teacher collaboration*
- support of student teachers during their practicum and/or articling/internship*
- citizenship roles which advance the interests of students.*

We further recommend that those receiving this designation be allotted time from their teaching duties, additional resources, and/or an honorarium from the Ministry, commensurate with their participation in such areas. A teacher's designation would continue at the pleasure of the Ministry.

The task force recommends a provincial designation to recognize “teaching excellence”. The identified reasons are that the best teachers should take on greater roles, there would be incentives and there would be recognition. The task force proposes that teachers who are so designated would be provided with time from their teaching duties, additional resources and/or an honorarium. These teachers would be invited to contribute their expertise to areas such as mentorship of other teachers, leadership in teacher collaboration, support of student teachers during the practicum or articling/internship and citizenship roles which advance the interests of students.

The notion that teachers need incentives or recognition in order to work with student teachers or participate in mentoring is insulting and reflects a failure to understand the culture of teaching. In a collegial structure, there is reliance and strength in colleagues. These are not traits for which recognition or incentives are required. This is further compounded by the further advice provided by the task force, which clearly indicates that only a small number of individuals would receive designations. It's everyone's role to take on these responsibilities, the note advises. What this creates, on the ground, are teachers who have a designation and/or time and/or an honorarium working with student teachers and mentoring beginning teachers and there are teachers who do not have a designation and/or time and/or an honorarium doing the same thing. This is very divisive and unhelpful for collegiality.

There are also technical problems with the proposal. Such an honorarium would not fit in with already settled collective agreements and it is decidedly unclear how a designation conferred at the pleasure of the Minister would actually work.

But these are small questions compared to the larger problems here. If the functions contemplated here are to be widely shared across the profession, the concept of recognizing some of the participants will not actually be motivating. It will create a two-tier culture; it will compromise collegiality; it will reduce the capacity for supporting student teachers and beginning teachers.

An alternative would be for the province to fund school boards to offer an administrative designation open to teachers. The designation, similar in nature to a curriculum coordinator in a school, could receive time and/or an allowance to organize and support programs for student teachers and beginning teachers. To maximize its impact, the administrative designation should be limited to a two-year period, not dissimilar to the opportunity to become a practicum associate at a university faculty of education. The notion that there are key administrative, lead or support tasks consolidated into a single position of school leadership, but that the position is shared, would counter the negative features of the task force's program. That said, the task force itself acknowledges that every teacher should contribute their expertise to mentor, support and collaborate with colleagues. Given scarce resources, establishing some form of recognition plan is not the highest priority in the view of the Association.

13 **RECOMMENDATION 13: TEACHING SUPPORT**

That the Ministry of Education improve our system of teaching support, including the availability of technology and related support, access to and adequacy of specialized supports and services for students (particularly during the early grades) and increased efficiency of processes to access supports.

The wording of the recommendation is virtually unintelligible. We think it relates principally to supports for inclusive education and for technology. Teachers are still waiting for the resources promised in *Setting the Direction* in 2009. The lack of supports for inclusive education is well past the breaking point. There are few “wrap around services” in schools. There are no signs on the horizon that funding will be provided. The Government of Alberta is completely aware of this significant funding shortfall and has done virtually nothing about it year after year. This is simply another call for funding that is not being provided.

The task force also calls for more technology and technology support. Alberta's investments in education technology top the country. While there can certainly be issues relating to technological change and support, teachers see them as less significant than the absence of support for inclusive education.

The Association supports funding for inclusive education and technology, including technology support.

14

RECOMMENDATION 14: SUPPORTS IN THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

That teachers be provided appropriate time for planning, collaborating, sharing best practices, and empowering innovation. The Task Force further recommends that the Ministry of Education create a framework for teacher professional learning [professional development] aligned with Inspiring Education and the research on effective programming, and work collaboratively with the Alberta Teachers' Association to strengthen the delivery and effectiveness of professional learning.

The Association supports the provision of time for planning, collaboration, sharing best practices and empowering innovation. The Association also believes that instructional (or assignable) time should be reduced to allow for collaboration. Extending the school day by thirty minutes and cancelling school for students one day every few weeks, but requiring teachers to attend school on the days students do not attend and delivering centrally planned professional development initiatives, does not provide more time for teachers. Teachers need time to do their lessons, do their marking, prepare tests, fill out reports, contact parents.

The task force also makes its view clear with respect to class size: “in focusing on supports for teachers, issues such as time for collaboration and professional learning are as important, and perhaps more important, than reducing class size.” The task force also refers to high performing school systems in other countries with “relatively large class sizes” but does not note that those systems also have significantly less instructional time for teachers. In effect, large classes are offset by instructional loads that are significantly less than in Alberta. While the task force mentions more time for planning and collaboration, there is no mention of less instructional time. Where does more time for collaboration, more time for planning, more time for individualization and personalization of instruction, more time for innovation, and more time to communicate with parents come from?

The Association agrees that professional learning can and should be strengthened and is willing to work with the Ministry on the issue. A professional development framework has already been developed in conjunction with other education partners and would be a good starting place.

15 **RECOMMENDATION 15: SELECTION PROCESS FOR SCHOOL LEADERS**

That the Ministry collaborate with school authorities and education stakeholders to develop a provincewide framework for the selection process of school leaders, reflecting best practice and aligning with the competencies defined in the practice standards for school leaders.

While the Association recognizes that it is very important to attract good candidates for school leadership positions, it is very difficult to believe that the selection process will be the same for the Calgary Board of Education as for Northland School Division. The framework will probably not be the key piece in attracting or recruiting prospective school leaders. Such factors as district support and policies, opportunities for mentorship, cohesiveness of staff, nature of students and the relative impact of equity issues (eg, child poverty, immigration, languages, etc) will have much more impact on recruiting practices than a standardized selection process. In addition, the proposal diminishes school board autonomy. The Association does not see merit in the recommendation.

16 **RECOMMENDATION 16: SCHOOL LEADERSHIP PREPARATION**

That new school leaders complete a mandatory leadership program with a core curriculum based on the practice standard for school leaders and the responsibilities defined in legislation.

The Association agrees there is merit in preparing a leadership program with a core curriculum but does not believe it is practical, at least at this time, to make the program mandatory. The Association is willing to work closely with the Ministry on this program, given that it would help to prepare our members for their legislated responsibilities. The Ministry should make an investment in such a program, and the Association is prepared to take the lead role in its delivery. The Ministry has made similar investments with the College of Alberta School Superintendents over the past decade to help prepare district leaders for their roles in the teaching profession.

It is very important that the program focus on the professional skills of effective school leaders, as established in the professional practice standard, not the employment expectations of the school board. Such a focus ensures attention to developing competencies, not assisting in employee selection.

17 **RECOMMENDATION 17: MENTORSHIP PROGRAM FOR SCHOOL LEADERS AND DISTRICT LEADERS**

That a provincial mentorship framework be introduced for school leaders and district leaders.

The Association agrees that there is merit in a provincial mentorship framework for school leaders and district leaders. The Leader2Leader Project offered by the Association in partnership with the Ministry has been a very successful venture. The task force also reports a comprehensive mentorship program offered by the College of Alberta School Superintendents for district leaders. There is value in mentorship programs for these roles, but time should be provided during the school day for the mentors and protégés.

18 **RECOMMENDATION 18: GROWTH, SUPERVISION AND EVALUATION FOR SCHOOL LEADERS AND DISTRICT LEADERS**

That the Ministry of Education develop a framework for “Growth, Supervision and Evaluation” for school leaders and district leaders aligned with the competencies defined in their respective practice standards and Inspiring Education.

The Association agrees that the provincial Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy should be expanded to include parallel policies for school leaders and district leaders. The focus should be ongoing growth, and school leaders other than the principal should discuss their growth plan with their principal. Principals should review their growth plans with their superintendent (or designate) and district leaders should review their growth plans with their respective superiors. A culture of individually directed growth should be inculcated across the system. School leaders and district leaders should be appropriately supervised and evaluated. All of the parallels to the Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy apply, whether focused on the administrative designation or the contract of employment. The various practice standards would also apply throughout these processes.

Such a parallel policy would focus on professional growth of school and district leaders and also require more senior leaders to supervise the professional practice of school and district leaders to ensure that the expectations of the system (especially as related to key leadership qualities and responsibilities) are delivered in the context of a collegial structure. Where there are concerns about professional practice, evaluation can be undertaken immediately. The policy would provide for maximum opportunities for growth and support, but also provides ongoing assurance and specific action when there are questions of competence.

Also, as in the case for teachers, once appointments are confirmed, school leadership designations should proceed on a continuous basis unless concerns arise through the normal course of supervision of professional practice, in which evaluation (and possibly remediation) will occur.

19 RECOMMENDATION 19: SEPARATION OF REVIEW OF CONDUCT AND COMPETENCE

That conduct and competence be dealt with through separate structures, including separate practice review processes. This would apply to both teachers and school leaders.

Conduct and competence are already dealt with through separate structures and should continue to be differentiated. There is ample evidence in this recommendation and Recommendation 20 that the task force does not understand the professional regulatory functions in operation.

For teachers employed by public or separate school authorities and who are active members of the Alberta Teachers' Association and subject to the *Teaching Profession Act*, professional **conduct** matters are dealt with in accordance with sections 16 through 65 of the *Teaching Profession Act*, the General Bylaws of the ATA and the Discipline Bylaw. The provisions apply to all teachers, school leaders, and those central office teachers who retained active membership in the Association (approximately 80% of central office teachers).

For these same teachers, professional **practice** or **competence** matters are dealt with in accordance with the Association's Practice Review Bylaw. The Bylaw applies to all classroom teachers. School leaders and district leaders are not covered by the bylaw unless they teach the *Program of Studies*.

For teachers who teach in private and charter schools and others not subject to the *Teaching Profession Act* (and that means every certificate holder not subject to the *Teaching Profession Act* as well as individuals who possessed but no longer possess a teaching certificate), professional **conduct** matters are dealt with in accordance with the Practice Review of Teachers Regulation.

Similarly, for these teachers not subject to the *Teaching Profession Act*, professional **practice** or **competence** matters are dealt with in accordance with the Practice Review of Teachers Regulation, which covers classroom teachers as well as school or district leaders who teach the *Program of Studies*.

So to be clear, there are distinct processes for conduct and competence in place today for teachers who are active members of the Association by virtue of being employed by public or separate school authorities.

It is interesting to note the task force's perception that district leaders are not subject to conduct standards. This general view is consistent with the management-labour structure proposed in the recommendations. In other words, the Minister and district leaders direct the teaching force. In the task force's view, there is no profession of teaching, just a workforce of teachers to be managed. The workers are subject to conduct standards enforced by the Minister.

The managers are not judged by the workers because the managers are the workers' superiors. However, the current reality is that district leaders are subject to conduct standards either under the *Teaching Profession Act* or the Practice Review of Teachers Regulation.

20 RECOMMENDATION 20: ASSURING PROPER CONDUCT OF TEACHERS AND SCHOOL LEADERS

That the practice review process for addressing issues of teacher and school leader conduct be significantly revised to assure greater openness, transparency, timeliness and efficiency. The Task Force further recommends that the practice review process for all teacher and school leaders be assumed by the Minister of Education.

The Task Force further recommends that there be changes in the Board of Reference appeal process for teachers and school leaders, including the removal of the power of reinstatement, and limiting severance payment to 12 months of salary. This would improve the timeliness of settlement, and provide greater certainty and fairness to both school authorities and the teacher.

The task force's recommendations regarding assurance of professional conduct also call into question its understanding of professional regulatory functions relating to the assurance of conduct and competence. The task force refers to this process as practice review. As noted above, practice review relates to professional **practice**, not professional **conduct**. In other words, it has to do with assuring that teachers are competent, not that their professional behavior meets professional conduct standards. Since this section is supposedly about professional conduct, the task force is confused when it talks about practice review.

Again, the source of the task force's confusion may be the regulation used by the Minister to police **conduct** of private school teachers (including private school administrators and early childhood services program operators), charter school teachers (including charter school administrators) and school teachers (including school administrators), central office teachers who are non-members of the Association or associate members, superintendents of schools (and their equivalents) and teachers who once possessed a teaching certificate but no longer possess a certificate. The same regulation is used to police the competence of private, charter and band school teachers (ie, certificate holders who teach the *Program of Studies*). The Practice Review of Teachers Regulation was developed in the 1980s to police the **competence** of classroom teachers in public, separate and private schools. At a later time, it was updated and expanded to address professional conduct matters not covered by the *Teaching Profession Act*. Although provision for addressing conduct was added, the Minister did not restructure the Regulation to add separate committees to address conduct issues. The Minister

decided to use the Practice Review Hearing Committee to hear matters relating to a teacher's professional conduct and also a teacher's professional competence for those not subject to Association processes.

A more serious problem, however, is that the task force seems to believe that the Practice Review of Teachers Regulation applies to teachers employed by public and separate school boards in Alberta. This is not correct. Professional conduct of active members of the Alberta Teachers' Association is assured by the *Teaching Profession Act*, not the Practice Review of Teachers Regulation.

The relevant statutory provisions are set out in sections 16 through 65 of the *Teaching Profession Act*, the General Bylaws of the Alberta Teachers' Association and the Discipline Bylaw. Any person can initiate a complaint, under section 24 of the *Teaching Profession Act*, and the executive secretary is compelled to initiate an investigation within 30 days. The investigator completes a report for the executive secretary and if there is sufficient evidence of professional misconduct, the executive secretary orders a hearing which must commence within 120 days. In such a circumstance, the Association prosecutes the member (it does not defend the member) before the Professional Conduct Committee and the hearing is public (with very few exceptions, eg, when student witnesses testify). The Professional Conduct Committee renders a finding (guilty or not guilty) and an order (penalty) for each hearing. If the member is guilty, the order can include suspension or cancelation of membership in the Association (which would remove the right to teach in a public or separate school system), a reprimand or severe reprimand, a fine, costs and a recommendation to the Minister of Education to suspend or cancel the member's teaching certificate. The member or Provincial Executive Council can appeal the finding or order to the Professional Conduct Appeal Committee, which has the authority to confirm or vary the finding or order.

If the complainant in the matter is advised that there is insufficient evidence of professional misconduct to warrant a hearing of the Professional Conduct Committee, the complainant can appeal the executive secretary's decision to the Complainant Appeal Committee. The committee reviews the complaint, the investigation and the report, and has the authority to confirm the decision of the executive secretary or to order a hearing in the matter.

The *Teaching Profession Act* also provides for an alternative dispute resolution process in lieu of a hearing of the Professional Conduct Committee. The process is set out in the Association's Discipline Bylaw, and was approved by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. The "Invitation" process can be used for comparatively minor professional misconduct, where the accused member acknowledges guilt. The member is required to meet with a senior member of the profession for a review of their misconduct and the delivery of advice about future conduct.

Currently, the Minister of Education recommends public members to serve on the Professional Conduct Committee, the Professional Conduct Appeal Committee and the Complainant Appeal Committee after vetting the names with the Association's Provincial Executive Council. The public members are appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council and provide a public window on professional conduct matters. We note that the Minister has taken no action to appoint new members or reappoint current members, whose appointments expired on 2014 06 14 and we are concerned that this failure to act may be in anticipation of his making unilateral changes to the discipline process.

The descriptions in the analysis of the task force do not focus on the statutory provisions of the *Teaching Profession Act* and point to inadequacies in a regulation that does not apply to teachers in public and separate school boards. The Association was not contacted by the task force for information about the Association's process with the result that the task force's analysis and conclusions are utterly confused: Recommendation 20, relating to professional conduct, calls for revision to the practice review process, which does not apply to professional conduct, but rather to matters of competence. The task force also calls for the Minister of Education to assume responsibility for the practice review process for all teachers in a recommendation that is supposed to relate to professional conduct. It appears that the task force is proposing that the Minister of Education assume responsibility for policing the professional conduct of all teachers, removing the responsibilities the Association has maintained since 1936. Yet, in Recommendation 25, the task force believes that the Association can continue to have both union and professional functions if the task force recommendations are adopted. It's unclear what professional functions the task force is referring to, given their recommendation to transfer professional functions to the Minister of Education.

Contributing to the confusion is the task force's assertion that the Board of Reference has something to do with teacher professional conduct an assertion that is fundamentally wrong. The conduct and competence processes outlined in the *Teaching Profession Act* have to do with a teacher's membership in the Alberta Teachers' Association and a teacher's certification to teach. A complaint launched under either process could produce an outcome that removes the teacher's membership in the Alberta Teachers' Association and the teacher's teaching certificate. In other words, it is about your right to teach not just for your board but anywhere.

The Board of Reference relates to a teacher's employment, and does not regulate professional conduct or professional practice. It is established in the *School Act* to provide an appeal mechanism to certain decisions of a board of trustees relating to employment. In Alberta, this statutory provision is most often used to address issues related to termination of a teacher's contract of employment with a school board. A board can terminate the employment of any teacher, but in doing so "shall

act reasonably.” [School Act, section 107(2)]. The role of the Board of Reference is to determine if the school board acted reasonably. Other unionized employees, and teachers in many other jurisdictions, bargain employment provisions into collective agreements, but in Alberta there are no such provisions because there is greater stability with one statutory system for all school boards in the province.

The Board of Reference does have the authority to reinstate a teacher [section 138(1)(c)], but cannot do so if the teacher should not be engaged in teaching or if there is just cause for termination [section 138(3)]. In making its order, the Board of Reference must consider if the teacher is guilty of gross misconduct, if the teacher refused to obey a lawful order of the board without justification, the risk to safety of students, coworkers and the teacher, the ability of the teacher to perform teaching duties effectively, the effect of reinstatement on the future relationship of the board and the teacher, the possibility of recidivism (ie, repeating undesirable behavior), whether reinstatement of the teacher would have the effect of undermining the confidence of Albertans in the public education system, and fairness to the teacher [section 138(2)]. Fundamentally, the Board of Reference ensures that a school board acts *reasonably* in an employment decision. The power of the Board of Reference to order reinstatement provides a measure of fairness for teachers who, having been unjustly dismissed by a board, may not have the ability to find an alternative employer in their community.

Without any analysis and captured within a section devoted to recommendations about professional conduct of teachers, the task force proposes sweeping changes to the statutory mechanism that provides oversight to school board decisions on employment. The effect of the task force’s recommendation would be to destroy the capacity of the Board of Reference. Without the power to reinstate, the Board of Reference would not be able to reverse decisions that are entirely unreasonable.

But it’s even worse. In the civil courts, a judge can order compensation when an employer terminates an employee’s contract of employment, but the compensation is set by the judge. The task force’s recommendation would limit the payment for the dismissal of any teacher to one year’s salary. To be clear, these recommendations would destroy the powers of the Board of Reference. Any teacher’s employment could be terminated at any time by a board by writing a cheque for one year’s salary. And the task force even has the audacity to suggest that “this would improve the timeliness of the settlement and provide greater certainty and fairness to both school authorities and the teacher.” It will be timely and certain—any teacher, school administrator and most central office teachers could lose their employment without cause. There would be no way to reverse this. Astonishingly, the task force sees this as being fair to the teacher.

In the unionized world, it is well established that termination of employment requires just cause. In the nonunionized world, it is well established that the courts are free to establish compensation when an employer terminates an employee’s

contract of employment, and the cash awards can be very high, often exceeding one year's salary. The task force's recommendation, with no justification, proposes a standard that is less than that which applies to the nonunioned sector. There is no question that this is the most serious recommendation in the report and would allow a school board to dismiss *any teacher at any time without cause*, and there would be no protection for the "excellent" teachers the task force wants to ensure occupy every classroom. The bias of the task force is readily apparent, given their view that the provision would be fair to the teacher.

21 RECOMMENDATION 21: MAINTENANCE OF CERTIFICATION FOR TEACHERS

That the Ministry of Education introduce a system of maintenance of certification for teachers to assure career-long professional growth, currency and competency. That the following elements be considered for the system of maintenance of certification for teachers:

Evaluation for the purposes of maintenance of certification would occur every five years (following the interim certification period).

Evaluation processes shall follow principles of natural justice and due process, and be aligned with the evaluation process outlined in the Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy.

Provisions for a one-year extension to the five-year evaluation period would be granted by the Minister of Education under exceptional circumstances (application must be made by the superintendent to the Minister).

Every year, principals would advise teachers in writing on their progress to qualify for maintenance of certification.

The Ministry of Education would maintain the certification of a teacher on the attestation of the superintendent. The superintendent's attestation would be informed by the principal who would seek input broadly from parents, other teachers, and students (ie, 360° feedback), and would be based on the demonstration of continued growth, currency and competency in accordance with the Teaching Quality Standard.

Teachers would be required to prepare a teaching excellence dossier of evidence of their professional growth, currency and competency.

The system would include appeal processes, and processes for a teacher to regain his or her certificate.

Following the election of Premier Klein, there were very significant reforms to education in Alberta. One of the areas identified for reform was the evaluation of teachers. Government wanted more consistency in teacher evaluation practices and a committee was established to develop provincial requirements. The provincial Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy was the product of that consultation process in 1998.

The resulting policy directs school boards in the development of local policy and has been strongly supported across the education sector. Other teachers' organizations have negotiated very extensive provisions on teacher evaluation into collective agreements, but that has not happened in Alberta. There has been widespread satisfaction with the policy. It replaced processes in place in the 1980s and 1990s that placed enormous weight on cyclical evaluation and insufficient weight on professional growth. Rather than cyclical evaluation of teachers whose competence was not questioned, the policy freed up resources to deal with teachers whose teaching practice needs improvement. A key element of the policy is supervision. A teacher is always supervised, and if there are concerns about a teacher's practice, an evaluation can be initiated at any time.

While teachers' organizations in other provinces have negotiated very extensive, restrictive and inflexible provisions relating to teacher evaluation into their collective agreement, this has not happened in Alberta because of widespread satisfaction with the existing provincial policy.

Given these realities, it is noteworthy that the task force makes no reference in its analysis to the ongoing supervision of teachers, which is an essential element of the assurance model. It attempts to suggest that nothing is happening "for promoting and assuring continuous practice improvement". Evaluations are done when a teacher is new or when there are issues, but otherwise the key to practice improvement is supervision. To suggest that teachers are not monitored is a blatant misunderstanding or misrepresentation of the policy. The expectation that principals engage in regular supervision of instruction is found in the *School Act*.

The task force proposes a return to the old cyclical evaluations from the 1980s and a program of recertification. While the task force suggests that their proposal is a scheme to maintain certification, it is not. It is the product of an evaluation each year by the principal. The evaluation would include input from parents, other teachers and students. It would be based on the "demonstration of continued growth, currency and competency". Competence is not assumed in this process—teachers are required to prepare a teaching excellence dossier to provide evidence that their certificate should be "maintained".

Combined with the changes to the professional growth plan (ie, its conversion from a teacher controlled annual growth process based on professional learning needs to a top-down directive to grow in certain ways with annual verification),

the recertification scheme (annual written evaluations based not just on observations but on input obtained from parents, other teachers and students) will require significant additional resources to complete. Our initial assessment of the requirements, on a conservative analysis, suggests the allocation of at least \$60,000,000 per year to perform these functions.

The task force believes that the Association “gets in the way of the process” by protecting teachers. In fact, the Association provides school administrators with extensive assistance in how to effectively supervise and evaluate teachers. The Association has developed programs of assistance to school administrators to ensure they are prepared to undertake this role and provide direct advice from dedicated staff and, if necessary, legal counsel. This assistance extends to outlining the steps necessary to successfully terminate the employment of a teacher or to prepare for a practice review. School administrators are members just like classroom teachers, and as members are provided with support in their roles.

It is interesting to note that the task force rejected the Association’s proposal, based on the professional needs identified in *Inspiring Education*, to build the capacity of the profession through a continuing education program. In our view, this could make a significant contribution to enhancing teacher efficacy, as long as the profession, through the Association, does it. Rather than providing a mechanism for the teaching profession to require a teacher to continuously update their qualifications through their career, the task force believes that teachers require additional inspection and surveillance and that principals need additional authority to ensure teachers are competent. Further, the task force believes it is appropriate for principals and district leaders to identify recommended areas for growth and impose them on teachers in the revised growth plan process. Teachers apparently cannot be trusted to do so themselves within the context of a collegial professional learning community.

Is there any profession where the member’s right to practice is determined by individuals who do not possess the right to practice? The task force believes a teacher’s ability to remain in practice has to pass the common sense sniff test of parents and students. This recommendation says an enormous amount about the task force’s view of teachers—the competence of teachers who have demonstrated competence should not be assumed and professional growth and building capacity will not make good teachers even better. Surveillance, top-down direction and regular inspection are the management’s required tools, along with a requirement for teachers who have already demonstrated their competence to provide evidence of their competence once again. Teachers are not members of a profession but members of a school board’s work force that require direction and constant inspection.

The task force rejects the current model of practice review. The Association is responsible for policing the competence of public and separate school teachers,

in accordance with the Teaching Quality Standard. Alberta adopted a practice review structure in the mid-1980s and transferred this responsibility to the Association in 2009. At that time, the practice review process was updated significantly.

While the Association is responsible for the practice review process, the Association does not control it. A superintendent of schools does. The role of the Association is to prosecute a teacher whose professional practice has been called into question. A superintendent of schools *shall* refer a matter to the Association when the superintendent concludes that the Teaching Quality Standard is not being met by the teacher, that the provincial Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy has been followed, and the teacher's suitability for certification is in question. Once advised by the superintendent, the executive secretary is required to order a hearing to review the teacher's professional practice and that hearing must commence within 120 days. These requirements are established in the Association's Practice Review Bylaws, as outlined in the *Teaching Profession Act* and have been approved by the Minister of Education.

The task force notes that no teaching certificate has been cancelled due to incompetence in the past ten years. To begin with, it is only since 2009, that the Association has had a responsibility to take forward the concerns raised by a superintendent of schools before a Professional Practice Review Committee and to seek the cancellation of the teacher's certificate. To date, only one case was brought forward by a superintendent and it was later withdrawn. The Association does not control the process, a superintendent does. For some reason, the task force sees the failure of superintendents to adhere to the statutory requirements of the *Teaching Profession Act* as a failure of the Association and proof that the process should return to the Minister of Education. Yet, the process to remove the certificate of a teacher who does not meet the Teaching Quality Standard is very clear. The school board could terminate the employment of the teacher, on the basis on the teacher's failure to meet the Teaching Quality Standard, and the superintendent would be expected to refer the matter to the Association's executive secretary. If at the conclusion of a hearing, a Professional Practice Review Committee confirms that the teacher does not meet the Teaching Quality Standard, the teacher would lose their membership in the Association and the Committee would recommend that the Minister cancel the teacher's teaching certificate. The teacher would then have no access to a Board of Reference because the teacher would no longer be authorized to teach in Alberta.

Prior to 2009, the Minister's practice review process also required the superintendent of schools to refer to practice review a teacher whose professional practice did not meet the Teaching Quality Standard. If the task force's assertion that no certificate has been cancelled due to incompetence in the past ten years is actually true, and this is taken to indicate a failure of the system, then the Minister's own process, which did not result in a single cancellation of a teaching certificate, must also be judged a failure.

So why have superintendents not triggered practice review either before or after 2009? If there are incompetent teachers out there, why are superintendents not using the process that is required and available to use? The Practice Review Bylaw requires action by the superintendent. Why are superintendents not fulfilling their statutory obligations? So is the problem the model, as the task force suggests, or is it the fact that superintendents are not fulfilling their statutory obligations? Or are “bad teachers” being counselled out or leaving of their own accord? Given that the task force chair stated on many occasions that the task force’s report would be based on solid evidence, what evidence is there that the Association “gets in the way of the process”? Why is there no commentary by the task force that the initiation of a practice review is entirely in the hands of a superintendent of schools, not the Association?

The task force also assumes that if no certificate was cancelled as a result of a hearing of the Professional Practice Review Committee, there must be a bunch of incompetent teachers out there. In fact, teachers choose to leave the profession before their competence is assessed in a practice review process. More than 25% of teachers leave the profession in the first few years and some of these teachers leave for reasons related to competence. Teachers are regularly counselled out of the profession by the Association. Since January 2011, more than 213 teachers have been counselled out of the profession by the Association or have agreed to leave through a severance arrangement with their board.

It is intriguing to note that the task force recommendation specifically relates to classroom teachers and there is no recommendation for recertification of school leaders or district leaders. Why is this the case? While Recommendation 22 addresses the redesignation of principals (not school leaders) on a five-year cycle, there is no mention of the teaching certificate and no recommendation that requires district leaders to obtain redesignation, never mind recertification. Why do the individuals seen by the task force as the managers not have to complete the task force’s requirements for recertification, like classroom teachers? Why is the continued possession of a teaching certificate treated differently for “managers” than for classroom teachers?

In sum, the task force wants to move away from professional relationships and impose management structures for teacher evaluation. In order to diminish the profession and the Association, the task force wants practice review to be handled by the Minister of Education. The task force prefers surveillance, directed growth, ongoing evaluation, recertification and management-labor relations over professional growth, capacity building, ongoing supervision and collegiality. These are wrongheaded directions and should not be pursued.

Key to assurance is the role of supervision. The Association believes that the supervision process can be strengthened significantly, to heighten assurance in a professional context, and such a direction would support the directions pursued

by the task force. Time will need to be allocated to ensure that supervision is completed. Periodic or cyclical evaluation is not supported by the Association; there is strong support for a model that assures quality through supervision and immediate action, through effective evaluation (and, if necessary, remediation) for teachers whose professional practice may not meet the requirements of the Teaching Quality Standard.

22 RECOMMENDATION 22: MAINTENANCE OF DESIGNATION FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

That the Ministry of Education establish a framework for the maintenance of administrative designation for principals every five years to assure leadership excellence.

The Association does not support the concept of recertification of teachers and it does not support the concept of redesignation of principals (or school leaders). The Association strongly believes in a focus on professional growth. Issues with respect to the practice of school leaders should arise through supervision and support and assistance can be provided. Where an evaluation is necessary, the evaluator should proceed immediately to deal with the concerns. At minimum, the administrative designation of a school leader who does not maintain the practice standard should be terminated.

It is interesting to note that the task force does not recommend the recertification of district leaders. Is this an oversight or does it reflect the view that these requirements are not necessary for “senior managers”?

23 RECOMMENDATION 23: PRINCIPAL PERFORMANCE

That the Ministry of Education develop a provincewide system to provide principals with annual written feedback on their practice to assure leadership excellence in accordance with the school leader practice standard. While the system should be provincewide, it should accommodate any unique circumstances of the individual school or school authority.

The Association does not support an annual evaluation for principals in order to assure leadership excellence. The Association strongly supports a professional model that focuses on growth and supervision of the principal’s professional practice. The respective supervisor can work with the principal to improve areas for growth, and if supervision raises concerns about the principal’s professional practice, the supervisor can proceed with an evaluation (and remediation, if necessary) to address the concerns. At minimum, the administrative designation of a principal who does not maintain the practice standard should be terminated.

The above provisions should also apply to other school leaders and to district leaders. It is intriguing to note that the task force recommends an annual

evaluation for principals, but again does not recommend an annual evaluation for other school leaders and there is no recommendation for an annual evaluation of district leaders. What is the message teachers and principals are to take from this?

It is the Association's view that the Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy applied to school and district leaders will be a very effective process for emphasizing and facilitating growth, for providing active and engaged supervision, and for moving quickly to evaluation (or remediation) where there are questions about a school or district leader's professional practice. While there is an emphasis on growth and support, there is clearly a process to provide assurance of school and district leader professional practice quality.

24 **RECOMMENDATION 24: EMPOWERING PRINCIPALS**

That principals be empowered to effectively undertake the human resource function related to teachers in accordance with the recommendations in this report. This may require changes in legislation. If this empowerment is not possible, we recommend consideration be given to removing principals from the Alberta Teachers' Association to ensure this empowerment.

The Association's concerns with respect to the task force's recommendations relating to teacher evaluation and practice review have been expressed. The Association believes that the principal needs to undertake effective supervision and evaluation and is committed to ensuring the principal has the skills to do so. Support and assistance is provided, but many principals do not have sufficient time free of teaching to complete their responsibilities. Some principals in small schools teach all day and it is very difficult for a principal who is teaching all day to effectively supervise and evaluate teachers.

The task force expressed the view that "action must be taken to enable and empower principals to effectively address issues of teacher competence and conduct by eliminating the impediments caused by conflicting loyalties..." What are the alleged impediments? What are the conflicting loyalties? The task force has not identified these factors, nor provided evidence. Nor has the task force identified what changes to legislation would be required to empower principals.

The Association favours dedicated time for principals to conduct supervision; this is a key aspect of a professional model of assurance. In addition, principals require ongoing professional development on their role (especially their obligations under the *School Act*) and counsel and support as required. The Association provides programs in support of principals both through the provincial Association and the Council for School Leadership. These programs should be expanded to ensure principals are skilled in supervision and evaluation and are confident in taking the steps necessary to provide assurances of teaching quality in their schools. The Association also provides assistance, through a dedicated staff officer in Member

Services (Associate Coordinator, Member Services—Administrator Assistance), to provide assistance and support to principals in their role. To be clear, the Association provides, on a routine basis, step by step advice on what the principal needs to do to successfully recommend to the superintendent of schools that a teacher's contract of employment be terminated. The role of the principal is defined in legislation and the Association provides assistance and support to the principal to be successful in their defined role.

Removing principals from the Association would bring an end to the collegial model and would replace it with a labor-management model of relationships. This would create many negative issues for future governments in Alberta to deal with that do not exist today. The threat to remove principals from the Association is very troubling.

25 **RECOMMENDATION 25: THE REGULATORY (GOVERNANCE) MODEL**

That the professional regulatory model for teachers be modified to implement the recommendations of this report. The Task Force believes that this can be achieved through collaborative transformation of the existing model in which the Alberta Teachers' Association continues to have both union and professional functions. If that is not possible, either a Ministry-based model or a separate professional college of teachers is recommended for consideration.

Longstanding Association policy proposes that the Association be responsible for the governance of the teaching profession in a way similar to other professions. In other words, we have sought self-governing status similar to other professions, where the professional organization is responsible for determining standards of professional conduct and professional practice. The Minister of Justice does not determine who can be a lawyer and the Minister of Health does not set the standards to become a doctor. While the task force believes that changes can be made to the current structures, the task force also proposes, in Recommendation 20, that practice review be transferred to the Minister of Education. It is not clear what is meant here, given that practice review is used by the task force to describe both conduct and competence processes. It also seems to fly in the face of this recommendation, which suggests that changes can be made to current processes and professional regulatory functions retained by the Association.

The removal of professional functions would effectively transform the Association from a professional organization to a trade union. The functions relating to the public interest and the interest of the profession would disappear and all that would be left would be the self-interest of union members. Such a change would have a profound effect on the organization, including its role, its program, its governance and who runs for office. Even though the task force proposes to remove professional functions only if changes cannot be made, the Minister of Education, on the day of the report's release, attacked the Association's professional processes,

attempting to undermine the role of the Association in policing conduct and competence. Attacks have continued since the release of the task force's report.

The dominant model of professional self-governance utilizes a single organization of the members of the profession, not two organizations. Yes, doctors and nurses have an organization dedicated to their self-interest and an organization (usually a college) dedicated to the public interest. However, other professions organize their structures to adequately separate issues of self-interest and public interest, and this is by far the dominant model for self-governance.

The task force on several occasions refers to a "perceived conflict" when the Association undertakes its legislated obligations related to the member's interest (eg, collective bargaining, representation under the *Labour Relations Code*) and when it undertakes its legislated functions relating to the public interest (policing conduct and competence). However, the task force does not provide any evidence of an actual conflict. Indeed, the task force did not contact the Association to discuss the operation of the professional conduct process nor professional practice review. (As noted earlier in this submission, the task force either misrepresents the professional regulatory processes or does not understand them, given the significant errors in Recommendation 20.)

Given that the task force has no actual evidence of a conflict, the task force relies on the cheap shot of "perceived conflict" and ample reporting of the Kendel Report, which has no application to Alberta. The use of Kendel's critique of the professional regulatory functions of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation is particularly unfair, given the very significant differences between the functions in Saskatchewan and Alberta. (For example, there are no public members named to serve on hearing committees in Saskatchewan and penalties are determined by their elected provincial executive. In Alberta, there are public members on hearing committees and the hearing committees themselves establish penalties.) If there are problems in Saskatchewan, that's close enough for the task force to believe, with absolutely no reported evidence, that there are problems in Alberta.

Once again, the task force issues a threat. Implement our recommendations or the Association should lose its professional status and become a trade union. There is no evidence that such a change will improve education in Alberta and abundant evidence that such a change would be very negative for the delivery of education and the relationship of the profession with government. Of course, it would also diminish the profession, reduce collegiality and be another step in introducing management-labour relations as the dominant structure in Alberta schools. In that respect, the threat is consistent with the overall direction of the task force to convert the teaching profession into a workforce of teachers directed by the Minister and superintendents.

Directions proposed by the Alberta Teachers' Association

The Association welcomes the opportunity to propose directions for consideration of the Government of Alberta. We have already outlined in our submission our concerns with many of the recommendations proposed by the Task Force for Teaching Excellence. The directions below include proposals for implementation by the Government of Alberta and, in some instances, proposals for implementation by the Association or other education partners.

Create an appropriate culture for growth, building capacity and assurance

It's important to consider the big picture. Stand back from the recommendations of the Task Force for Teaching Excellence and look at them together. Rather than working to further advance the professional capacity of one of the very best teaching forces in the world, the majority of the report focuses on additional accountability measures. It's about reducing the role of the profession and the professional organization and replacing these with management structures. The principal becomes a human resources manager first and foremost and manages teachers. Directed growth, annual cyclical evaluation, recertification. Professional regulatory processes are transferred to the Minister of Education away from the teaching profession. There's no trust of teachers. Remove employment protections for all teachers. Remove all teachers' rights. Allow management to make any employment decision they want even when there is no cause. In sum, the task force does not see a teaching profession at all—it's just a workforce of teachers to be directed by the Minister and superintendents. The task force proposes to gut the profession and hand off to management.

If we continue to aspire to be among the best performing jurisdictions in the world, the task force's recommendations constitute a recipe for disaster. We need a professional culture that uses collegiality to strengthen the system, foster professional growth and build capacity.

Alberta's basic education sector is at an important crossroad. We are recognized as one of the leading jurisdictions globally both in terms of student performance and equity. This position was achieved through decades of collaboration and incremental reforms that recognized that mutual respect and trust were the pillars that would allow for local flexibility and responsiveness to community needs alongside teacher professional autonomy—all built on a provincial framework of support for equity, innovation and creativity. We have a unique opportunity to capitalize on the promise of the continued growth of this province if we can bring the best of our past forward while learning from the successes of other high performing jurisdictions. A growing body of evidence is demonstrating the

importance of building teacher professional capital through strong professional associations that work in consort with governments that commit to comprehensive and sustained support focused on the fundamental belief that all students can learn well. The international body of research on educational development already points to the successes of Alberta. Rather than the whole scale unproven reforms suggested by the task force, the Association is eager to work with government on identifying those areas for improvement based on the research and a consensus of leading experts in change and educational policy. The system can be strengthened through building capacity and ongoing professional growth. Assurance processes are essential, and must be part of the system—we want teaching quality as well as school and district leadership.

1

Clarify that the Government of Alberta seeks to build across the sector an appropriate culture for professional growth, building capacity and public assurance.

In the Association's view, the directions of the task force go in precisely the wrong direction—inspection, direction, accountability, top-down management. It would be constructive for the Government of Alberta to set a more appropriate direction in the sector.

Update standards and preparation programs

2

Update Teaching Quality Standard to reflect current research about teaching practice, including excellence in teaching, and develop practice standards for school leaders and district leaders on a similar basis.

The existing standard requires updating and there should be professional practice standards developed for school leaders and district leaders. As evident in high performing jurisdictions, such standards must address the growing complexity of the learning needs of students, while being sufficiently flexible to provide for the professional autonomy of teachers, school leaders and district leaders through collaborative inquiry and peer review. The standards serve as the basis for assurance and also support.

3

Invite teacher preparation institutions to review their programs to ensure that they are built around the best research about teaching practices, including excellence in teaching, and the updated Teaching Quality Standard.

Alberta's teacher preparation institutions do not require annual supervision from the Ministry to complete this task, as suggested by the task force. Given that each institution has a memorandum of agreement with the Minister to deliver a teacher preparation program, it is appropriate that the institutions be given the freedom to undertake the review. Globally, the historically proven model of academic institutional review through peer review simply needs to be funded and supported by government. Review of teacher preparation programs cannot be a bureaucratic process undertaken by government.

4

Establish a core curriculum for a program to provide skills training for school leadership and district leadership roles. While completion of program should not be mandatory, the curriculum can form the basis of various leadership development initiatives and directly influence professional practice.

At the present time, the Association does not believe that mandatory programs to become a school leader (or district leader) will produce encouragement to take on the very important role. There are several concerns that arise from the idea of making such a program mandatory. Many urban school jurisdictions have well articulated leadership development programs that incorporate the Professional Practice Competencies for School Leaders in Alberta. School leaders in those jurisdictions would not need to participate in a full leadership development program, but may wish to attend certain modules in a new program. A range of non-mandatory leadership development programs should be made available to school leaders (and district leaders). A recently completed national study involving 500 principals across Canada (undertaken with the Canadian Association of Principals and the Alberta Teachers' Association) clearly illustrates the need for ongoing professional learning opportunities for school leaders, rather than the creation of additional credentialing. The Association is prepared to support the Ministry by taking a lead role in the creation and delivery of a leadership development program grounded in the professional practice standards for school leaders and the professional practice standards for district leaders (excepting specific programs for superintendents and chief deputy superintendents).

5

Establish alternative pathways to Letters of Authority (and ultimately teacher certification) in content areas where there is a shortage of certificated teachers. Facilitate recruitment.

The Association has a long history of working closely with the Ministry to find workable solutions in areas where there is a teacher shortage and we will continue to do so, including facilitating recruitment in these areas. The Bridging to Teacher Certification (including the Reverse Bridging) program has sufficient flexibility to meet the needs in this area. In the past year, the Government cut the funding, making the program no longer operational. Funding needs to be restored to reestablish an effective mechanism to address teacher shortages in key areas.

Provide support and build capacity

6

Establish a mandatory provincial internship program and provide sufficient release time for interns and mentors. A teacher who successfully completes a full-year provincial internship program would be eligible for a continuing contract.

A provincial internship program (including release time for interns and mentors) was developed in 2007, but there was no funding available to implement the program. Longitudinal research in Alberta illustrates the need to enhance both internships and to sustain mentorships as a part of system-wide school

development strategies. In short, sustained support for teachers in the early years of professional practice is a key correlate of system success overall.

7

Establish provincial mentorship program for teachers, school leaders and district leaders.

There have been several provincial committees devoted to the development of a mentorship program, but previous efforts have not led to the necessary funding for implementation. The Association has made a longstanding commitment to work with education partners in this regard. Collaborative mentorship projects have proven to be very successful. As well, independent research reviews of the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement have illustrated the positive impact of sustained support for mentorship programs.

8

Increase funding for teacher support, especially supports required for inclusive education.

Increased funding for teacher support is critical, and has not been provided by Government. Attention needs to be paid to supports for inclusive education and the requirements for wrap around services in schools. Government is fully aware of these deficiencies, and teachers have little faith that Government will act. Teachers do not miss the fact that the vast majority of the task force recommendations focus on inspection and accountability, not support.

9

Increase funding for planning and collaboration and reduce instructional time requirements for teachers.

Provide time to do the job in order to make the work more manageable. Workload issues continue to be a major issue for teachers. Time for planning and collaboration should not be yet another add-on to a teacher's work. Instructional time requirements for teachers need to be reduced. In addition, Government needs to take immediate action to restore class size averages proposed by Alberta's Commission on Learning and implemented in 2004.

10

Strengthen the importance of the teacher professional growth plan and continue the focus on the teacher's professional learning needs. Members who do not draft or file their professional growth plan or who do not complete the professional growth plan process will be referred to the Association for professional discipline.

The Association places significant priority on professional growth and focusing on growth is a very important activity for all members of the profession. The Association is prepared to stand by this very important focus by ensuring that members develop their growth plans, file them and complete the growth plan process. This does not mean that anticipated growth always is uniformly achieved—it is possible to fail or for growth to be slower than anticipated. That's okay, but the growth plan process is completed. Failure to do so will result in professional discipline.

11

Through the Association, introduce a continuing education requirement so that all certificate holders continue to update their qualifications through their careers.

The Association believes that all certificate holders should continue to update their qualifications throughout their careers. The *Teaching Profession Act* should be amended to allow the Association to administer a continuing education requirement for all certificate holders. The Association proposes shared governance of the initiative, similar in nature to the operation of the Teacher Qualifications Service, which is governed by the Teacher Salary Qualifications Board. A board would be established for this purpose with membership from the Ministry, the Alberta School Boards Association, the College of Alberta School Superintendents, Faculties of Education and majority membership from the Alberta Teachers' Association. The Association would administer the initiative in accordance with the directions set by the board. Continuing education and professional development programs or priorities would also be identified by the board. The initiative would be devoted to improving the capacity of the teaching profession over time and ensuring currency.

12

The Association will review and update its program of service to principals and other system and district leaders, ensuring access to Association support in discharging their duties and responsibilities.

The Association will review and update its program of service to principals and other system and district leaders to ensure appropriate levels of support so that these individuals can fulfill their legislated duties and responsibilities. Ongoing case study research undertaken by the Association and others clearly illustrates the impact of sustained support for the instructional leadership role of the school principal. Supports need to be in place.

13

The Association will assess the potential impact of a corps of teachers equipped to provide support and assistance to teachers whose practice has been evaluated to be marginal.

The Association will assess the potential of a new service available at the request of an individual teacher or a school board to provide support and assistance to a teacher whose practice is evaluated as marginal. The service could provide direct mentorship and support to improve professional practice.

Assurance

14 *Strengthen supervision component of Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy,*

Provide dedicated time to principals for supervision; require principals to file a supervision plan for the year and a supervision log at the end of the year.

As noted in the Association's submission, it is very important for self-actualized members of a profession to focus on professional growth rather than top-down direction and inspection. It is also very important to have effective mechanisms in place to provide assurance. Effective supervision is critical and this process needs to be strengthened in the Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy. The Association believes that dedicated time should be provided to principals to conduct supervision. Quite simply, there has to be time in the school day to do it. Principals should be required to develop and file a supervision plan each year, accounting for the time required and provided for supervision. A supervision log would also be filed at the end of the year, demonstrating that the time was committed to supervision. Supervision is a critical component of the assurance program.

15 *Provide funding to assist the Association to deliver skills training across the province for principals in effective application of supervision and evaluation.*

To ensure that supervision and evaluation practices are current and effective, the Association is ready to provide skills training programs for principals across the province. The Association is prepared to take a lead role in the creation and delivery of a comprehensive leadership development program based on the professional practice standards for school leaders. Funding from the Ministry to provide for this program (along the lines provided over the past decade for skills training programs for CASS members delivered through CASS) would ensure a more immediate and complete delivery. This work should not start from a deficit model; rather, it should focus on the reality that Alberta school leaders are already recognized as some of the most proficient in the world. Cross-jurisdictional and international partnerships where school leaders share and develop promising practices have emerged as effective models for developing leadership capacity.

16 *Develop provincial professional growth, supervision and evaluation policies for school leaders and district leaders and provide skills training for supervisors in effective application of policy.*

The Association believes that growth, supervision and evaluation policies should be developed for school leaders and district leaders that are in line with policies developed for classroom teachers. The focus for school and district leaders should be growth and their respective supervisors should engage in appropriate levels of supervision and, if necessary evaluation or remediation. The Ministry should also fund skills training for proper implementation of the policies.

17 *Amend the Teaching Profession Act to make the following changes to the professional conduct process:*

Public posting of the hearing dates

Public posting of the name of the accused member and charges

Public posting of the hearing decision

Remove the discretion from the Professional Conduct Committee and Professional Conduct Appeal Committee on serious misconduct cases (sex with a student, violence toward a student) so that the penalty is expulsion of membership and cancellation of certificate.

The Association takes very seriously its legislated obligation to protect the public interest in regulating the professional conduct of members. Given that the *Teaching Profession Act* was amended well before the advent of freedom of information and protection of privacy legislation, the Association does not currently have the statutory authority to post hearing dates, the name of the accused member, the charges against the accused member, or the hearing decision itself. Indeed, the Association is currently awaiting trial in the Court of Queen's Bench on several FOIP issues, including the specific issue of whether the Association can publicly release the name of a member or former member or if the name of the member or former member is the private information of the member or former member and not available for release without the consent of the member or former member.

The Association also believes there is merit in identifying serious misconduct cases for which the penalty should always be expulsion of membership (or a declaration of ineligibility for membership) and cancellation of a teaching certificate. While this removes the discretion of a hearing committee (and for that matter, the discretion of the Minister), the Association believes that the protection of the public interest is essential and such a change would make very clear to the public, parents and teachers that there are significant consequences for very serious misconduct.

At the present time, the Association has the toughest provisions in any profession in the country for readmission to the profession following suspension of membership (or a declaration of ineligibility for membership). The intention of these recommendations is to make the Association's expulsion provisions the toughest of any profession in the country.

18 *The Association will make the process more visible: advertise the availability of the professional conduct process to the public, establish an Association complainant advocate to assist complainants with initiating a complaint against a member and communicate to the public and the Minister an annual report on complaints (including timeliness and efficiency), investigations, hearings, findings and orders.*

Although the process is certainly visible today, the Association will take further steps to ensure that the process is visible in the public. The availability of the professional conduct process can be advertised. We can name an executive

staff officer of the Association to act as a complainant advocate in order to assist complainants in initiating their complaints. While the results of the professional conduct process are currently reported in the *Annual Report of the Alberta Teachers' Association*, there is certainly merit in a stand alone report that analyzes complaints, investigations, hearings, findings and orders, and makes the information available to the public. Together, these initiatives provide assurance to the public that measures are in place to address allegations of professional misconduct and the issues are dealt with in the public interest.

19 *Amend the Certification of Teachers Regulation so that a teacher whose teaching certificate has been suspended must pass a “fitness to teach” test before being eligible to regain the teacher’s certificate.*

It is virtually impossible for a teacher who has been suspended from membership in the Association to regain their membership. The Association maintains the toughest provisions relating to suspension of membership of any profession in the country. The Certification of Teachers Regulation does not require a “fitness to teach” test before a teacher whose teaching authority has been suspended regains their teaching authority. A teacher’s certificate is returned at the end of the period of suspension. In our view, such a practice does not safeguard the public interest.

20 *Amend the Practice Review Bylaw, established under the Teaching Profession Act, to make the following changes to the practice review process:*

Public posting of the hearing dates

Public posting of the name of accused member and allegations

Public posting of the hearing decision.

As noted above, the Association is committed to transparency. A change to legislation will be required to release the above information without the consent of the member concerned.

21 *Upon the completion of practice standards for school leaders and district leaders, amend the process outlined in the Practice Review Bylaw to establish practice review for these members.*

The Association believes that processes which parallel practice review for classroom teachers should also be in place for school leaders and district leaders. The Practice Review Bylaw will need to be amended to adopt these revisions.

22 *The Association will make the process more visible: advertise the availability of the practice review process to the public, establish an Association complainant advocate to assist complainants with initiating a complaint to a superintendent of schools against a member and communicate to the public and the Minister an annual report on complaints (including timeliness and efficiency), hearings, findings and orders.*

The Association is certainly willing to undertake more steps to make the practice review process more visible. We are also prepared to establish a complainant advocate to assist complainants with initiating a complaint about a member to the superintendent of schools and we will develop an annual report on complaints for the information of the Minister.

23 *The Association will work with the College of Alberta School Superintendents and the Ministry to provide skills training to superintendents so they are familiar with the Practice Review Bylaw and their statutory obligations under the School Act and the Teaching Profession Act.*

The Association conducted skills training sessions in 2008–2009 to ensure that all superintendents were well aware of the Practice Review Bylaw and felt able to refer a matter to the executive secretary when it was appropriate to do so. While there have been changes every year to CASS membership since, the Association has provided information on the statutory obligations of superintendents (relating to the *Teaching Profession Act*) at the annual CASS conference for newly appointed superintendents. Clearly, there is a need to do much more and we will ensure that every superintendent is aware of the process established under the *Teaching Profession Act*.

24 *Establish and provide access to a public register of members, including member status.*

Following appropriate amendments to the *Teaching Profession Act*, the Association will establish a register of members and provide public access. Any member of the public will be able to obtain information about any member's status, including the status of former members.

Conclusion

In 2018, the Association will celebrate the centenary of the formation of the Alberta Teachers' Alliance. The Alliance, which later became the Alberta Teachers' Association, was formed to provide teachers a measure of protection from capricious employers, to improve the general quality of teachers' salaries and conditions of work, but also to advance teaching as a profession.

From the outset, the Alliance sought to gain recognition of the profession, to promote the value of education and to advocate for university-based teacher professional education. The dedication of the organization to these objectives and to the desire of teachers to be treated with respect and dignity was reflected in the Alliance's Latin motto "Magistri neque servi" or "Masters, not servants." Even in the second decade of Alberta's existence, the province's teachers saw themselves as more than employees and, instead, as masters of the science, art and human enterprise of teaching.

In 2018, there will be an Alberta Teachers' Association. For better or worse, the character, function and role of that Association will be shaped by decisions that are within the power of government to make.

The government can choose to accept the recommendations made by the task force and take away defining professional responsibilities from the Association. The government can choose to drive a wedge between principals and classroom teachers. The government can choose to undermine teacher tenure and collegiality. The result will be to create an Association that is less concerned with the public interest and one exclusively focused on the immediate labour objectives of its members. This has been the consequence, perhaps unintended, of decisions made by governments in British Columbia and Ontario.

Or the government can continue in the visionary direction that was originally set out in 1936 when the government of William Aberhart amended the *Teaching Profession Act* to establish the Association as the united voice of profession with responsibility for policing the conduct of its members. The government can continue to enhance the professional role and capacity of the Association and so contribute to maintaining in this province a structure and culture of teaching that has contributed to the province's educational success and that is regarded nationally and internationally as a model of good practice.

In short, the politicians will get the Association they deserve. Teachers, students and the public will have to live with the consequences.

It should be clear that teachers would prefer the second approach, and have provided in this response suggestions for improving those recommendations of the task force that are salvageable and constructive alternatives to other recommendations that are misguided, malicious or simply unintelligible.

The work of the task force is done. Hopefully some learning has taken place and the Minister of Education and his successors will seek in future to focus on fostering improved teaching and learning in true collaboration with the profession as represented by the Alberta Teachers' Association. Public education may be too important to leave solely to teachers but teachers are too important to be left out.



The Alberta
Teachers' Association

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