

December 4, 2003

## Government supports 84 commission recommendations

*Edmonton...* The Alberta government supports 84 of the 95 recommendations of Alberta's Commission on Learning, including class-size guidelines, greater emphasis on fine arts and second-language learning and increased focus on supporting Aboriginal students and students with special needs.

"Alberta's Commission on Learning gave us some very good recommendations," said Learning Minister, Dr. Lyle Oberg. "It also gave us an unparalleled opportunity to turn the page and start a new chapter in Alberta's education system. We're going to take full advantage of it. Today, we have the beginnings of a new plan. Tomorrow, we get down to the business of making it a reality."

Government and education stakeholders will now begin working collaboratively on implementation plans to phase in each of the 84 supported recommendations. Affected stakeholders will be consulted and consideration will be given to matters ranging from how the recommendations fit with existing initiatives and one another, to what the financial needs will be.

"There are significant costs associated with implementing many of these recommendations," said Oberg. "That's one of the areas we'll be looking at as we phase in these recommendations over the coming years. Although it's impossible to put a dollar figure on things right now, education is government's top priority and we are committed to investing in it."

The Commission's recommendation that \$90.6 million be invested in the K-12 education system no later than Budget 2004 has already been fulfilled.

Of the remaining 11 Learning Commission recommendations, nine are seen as having very significant implications for the system and its stakeholders, and they warrant further review before any final decisions are made. These recommendations include full-day and junior kindergarten, removing principals from the Alberta Teachers' Association, and a new collective bargaining model.

The remaining two recommendations – that school boards be allowed additional taxation authority and that school infrastructure be consolidated within the department of Learning – have been turned down.

"Alberta Infrastructure is the expert in government-owned and supported infrastructure projects, including schools. It would be costly and inefficient to make this administrative change that would have no benefit for learners," said Oberg. "As for giving school boards additional taxing authority, Albertans have expressed strong objections against it."

Alberta's Commission on Learning submitted its final report to government on October 7, 2003.

-30-

Backgrounder attached.

For more information contact:

Bart Johnson  
Alberta Learning Communications  
(780) 427-5196  
Cell: (780) 446-9190  
To be connected toll free dial 310-0000