

March 4, 2004

Government responds to more recommendations of Alberta's Commission on Learning

Edmonton... Professional development plans for schools, a voluntary professional council for principals and vice-principals, and a new process for addressing teacher competency are among the highlights of government's latest response to the Learning Commission.

After responding to 86 of 95 commission recommendations in December 2003, government is now addressing most of the remaining nine that had been put over for further review.

"Taking the time to do a thorough assessment of these recommendations was crucial considering their potential impact on the learning system," said Minister of Learning Dr. Lyle Oberg. "Our response balances the intent of the Commission's recommendations with the perspectives of education stakeholders, and ensures we continue to focus on what's best for Alberta students."

Other highlights of government's response include improved sharing of effective practices between charter schools and other schools, the continuation and improvement of the Board of Reference to hear employment issues outside the scope of the new teacher practice review process, retaining the Alberta Teachers' Association as the body responsible for both professional services and collective bargaining, and expansion of the professional responsibilities of teachers. A backgrounder is attached with details of government's response to the recommendations and the rationale for each.

Parts of Recommendation #81 – as it relates to province-wide bargaining for teachers and limiting what can be bargained for – remain under review to allow for continued discussion with those most affected by this recommendation. Government also continues to review recommendations to set up junior and all-day kindergarten programs.

"There are widely varying opinions on these recommendations," said Oberg. "I want to continue the dialogue with parents, teachers, and education organizations to ensure that any final decisions have the greatest benefit for students and our learning system."

Work is already underway to act on the 84 recommendations government announced its support for last December. Government continues to work with education organizations, parents, teachers and others to discuss and draft implementation plans for phasing in the recommendations. Examples of initiatives already in progress are introduction of mandatory daily physical activity for students, enhanced second language learning and additional supports for aboriginal students. Government has already acted on the Commission's recommendation to cover what it identified as a funding shortfall of more than \$90 million.

Alberta's Commission on Learning made its recommendations to government in its report, *Every Child Learns, Every Child Succeeds*, released in October 2003.

- 30 -

A backgrounder is 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