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Attention: Education reporters

MEDIA RELEASE

March 4 announcement marks progress on Learning Commission report, says ASBA

While decisions are still pending about how teacher salaries will be bargained and the introduction of full-time Kindergarten and Junior Kindergarten, Alberta School Boards Association President Michele Mulder said the Minister of Learning's March 4 announcement about six of the nine set-aside Learning Commission recommendations reflected a concerted effort by the Alberta School Boards Association, the provincial government and the Alberta Teachers' Association to find common ground.

"From the outset – recognizing that not every school board agreed with each and every recommendation – the ASBA endorsed the Learning Commission report as good for students," said Mulder. "In that spirit, the ASBA participated in discussions about the nine recommendations, because we wanted to find solutions that were best for students and because we wanted to find common ground among the people who will ultimately work together to bring this report to life – school boards, teachers and the provincial government."

"While we didn't get everything we wanted – we are disappointed the minister rejected the Learning Commission's recommendation to remove the requirement that the Minister of Learning approve the appointment of each school board's chief executive officer – at the end of the day, we have a starting point on key initiatives where we can all work together."

With 47 teacher contracts still to be settled, Mulder called for a swift resolution to the contentious question of how teacher bargaining will occur in Alberta. "The Learning Commission said the current model doesn't work. While ASBA policy supports local bargaining, school boards are split on this issue. We need a resolution to this question so we can get on with business."

Mulder called on the government to ante up the funding so school boards can begin implementing the recommendations that will make a real difference for students. "School boards are keen to get funding so they can address class sizes – as recommended by the Learning Commission."

"As employers and as governors, how the management system is structured is important and school boards must be diligent about the kind of system we build to support schools into the future. That said, I believe school boards are looking forward to refocusing our attention on those things that directly impact teaching and learning in classrooms so we can make things better for students."

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The Alberta School Boards Association serves and represents all public, separate and francophone school boards in Alberta