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EDUCATION

Office of the Minister
MLA, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater

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Ms. Carol Henderson
President
Alberta Teachers' Association
11010 - 142 Street
Edmonton AB T5N 2R1

Dear Ms. Henderson:

I want to personally thank you for your efforts over the last few years, and in particular over the last few months as you and your staff visited with many of your Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) local bargaining unit members, providing encouragement and support during their discussions regarding the Framework Agreement. I know we agree that using legislation to secure a long-term agreement is not the preferred solution; however, I think we also agree it was something we needed to do in the best interests of students and all education stakeholders.

The *Assurance for Students Act* will provide a stable environment that will lead to the best possible learning experience for our children as we move the *Inspiring Education* transformation agenda forward. Now that we have legislation in place, it is important to facilitate its successful implementation.

We wish to offer assurances as to what may change during this four-year period and what will not. As a government, we have an ongoing obligation to exercise regulatory powers assigned to us and to continue to develop and enforce policies that foster and enhance Alberta's educational system. We cannot abandon our responsibilities in this area. This includes responsibility for teacher certification and for professional competencies and standards.

We understand that, during this four-year period, teachers will be concerned that the legislative provisions that go hand-in-hand with their collective agreement rights be maintained. In the spirit of this agreement, government will commit not to proclaim any legislative changes that affect the core statutory protections afforded to teachers. Currently, these provisions are contained in various sections of the *School Act*. Once the Education Act is proclaimed, those provisions will be contained in Part 7 and Section 245.

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The proclamation of the Education Act, provided it includes those same protections, will not be a violation of this commitment. Changes to Sections 227 (2) and 227(3) of the Education Act will not be a violation of this commitment. Notwithstanding the above, the commitment will not be considered to be violated by changes to the Education Act or to other legislation to implement a different bargaining model provided:

- (1) the association's role of bargaining agent is recognized;
- (2) the association is fully consulted and has an opportunity for input; and
- (3) any changes do not become effective until the next round of association collective bargaining.

Similarly, government will commit not to proclaim any legislative changes to those aspects of the *Teaching Profession Act* that address membership in the association and the structure and objects of the ATA.

The *Assurance for Student's Act* will result in collective agreements under the provisions of the *Labour Relations Code*. The association's current rights as bargaining agent will continue during the term of this legislation, including the right to enforce that agreement by grievance and arbitration, subject to the existing provisions of the *Labour Relations Code*.

We pledge to seek the Legislative Assembly's support for the necessary funding to enable the memorandum of agreement's full execution and implementation.

The legislation will provide stability for four years. During that period, government will consult over effective processes for achieving agreements into the future. This will include consultation with the association as bargaining agent, as well as with other educational stakeholders.

Government will continue to explore ways of improving education in Alberta. We know this is a goal we share with the association. We will undertake to use our best efforts to consult with Alberta's teachers through the association on issues that will improve the learning environment for Alberta's students. We look forward to our continued collaboration. We may not always agree, but the views of the association and the members it represents will be heard.

The *Inspiring Education* agenda will continue to be our focus. Through that initiative, we will continue to consult with all Albertans and stakeholders like you on ways to improve the system.


In addition to the more specific commitments given above, we commit that, before accepting any recommendations affecting the role of teachers, we will consult with the ATA. This allows us to consult over the future and to provide teachers and the province with four years of stability in the terms and conditions of employment (statutory and contractual) that apply to teachers, while still fulfilling our legal responsibilities for regulating the profession and the setting and upholding of quality standards and competency within the profession.

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The Government of Alberta and the ATA recognize that the role of teachers is changing. We commit to establish a Teacher Development and Practice Advisory Committee that will advise the Minister on the many matters with respect to the 21st century teacher, and how Alberta can continue to have the world's best in front of our students. The ATA will have strong representation on the Teacher Development and Practice Advisory Committee and any major legislative, regulatory or policy shifts regarding the profession and teaching will be vetted at that committee prior to government consideration.

I believe this agreement will balance the needs of teachers for stability and security during the four years of this agreement with the ongoing need to collaboratively improve education in ways supported by the people of Alberta.

Sincerely,



Jeff Johnson
Minister
MLA, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater