



November 23, 2007

Mr. Frank Bruseker
President
Alberta Teachers' Association
11010 – 142 Street NW
Edmonton, AB T5N 2R1

Dear Mr. *Bruseker*:

In our endeavour to ensure the best possible learning environment for our children, addressing the pre-1992 teachers' unfunded pension liability has been an important priority for my government. In my mandate letter to Minister of Education Ron Liepert, I instructed that one of his key priorities was to initiate negotiations on options for a reasonable long-term solution to the teacher's unfunded pension liability issue. In June, I reinforced this commitment to you and the entire Alberta Teachers' Association by stating our government would commence negotiations on the pre-1992 unfunded pension liability issue with the goal of developing a solution by this fall.

Our November 15 announcement confirmed fulfillment of that commitment and I am pleased that we successfully reached a Memorandum of Agreement (in principle) with the Association to assume the teachers' portion of the pre-1992 teachers' unfunded pension liability. As I said at the news conference, the agreement makes right an irritant that has hung over the province, its taxpayers and teachers for half a century.

All parties expended considerable effort in this negotiation to find a lasting solution that balances the interests of teachers, students, school boards and taxpayers. The fact we were able to reach a successful agreement is testament to the resolve of both parties.

Now that we have reached an agreement in principle, it is incumbent on all parties to facilitate its successful implementation. To that end, I pledge to seek the Legislative Assembly's support for the necessary funding to enable the Memorandum of Agreement's full execution and provide a five-year stable learning environment for teachers, students, school boards and Albertans. In addition, our government will pursue the necessary legislative amendments to enact the agreement at its earliest possible convenience.

Of course, the offer of labour stability requires all parties to act in accordance with the spirit of the agreement. As such, our government will commit that it has no intention of making changes to legislation, regulation or policy that will affect the employment conditions under which teachers currently work. Additionally, there is no intent to change the membership status of any member of the Association, no intent to make revisions to the current collective bargaining rights of teachers under the *Labour Relations Code* and no intent to replace the Board of Reference.

Beyond the legislative and financial aspects of this agreement, I also wish to reinforce to Association members that we remain fully committed to important programs designed to improve the delivery of our education system, such as the Class Size Initiative. Our government recognizes reducing class sizes goes a long way in laying the foundation for a positive learning environment for our students.

The Class Size Initiative is now in its fourth year, with funding provided to hire 2,500 additional teachers for our classrooms. This is an ongoing financial commitment by government to school jurisdictions and school jurisdictions will be expected to allocate resources to achieve the Alberta's Commission on Learning targets. This funding remains targeted and school jurisdictions will not be penalized on the progress achieved. To reflect our government's commitment to accountability and transparency, we will continue to monitor class size averages and will continue to report on jurisdictional class size averages, as recommended by Alberta's Commission on Learning in Recommendation 14.

In addition to supporting ongoing initiatives with the Association, we look forward to establishing new initiatives focused on creating an improved relationship between the province and the Association. I understand the Minister of Education will be following-up with the Association in the New Year to begin discussions on establishing a consultation committee with representatives from the government and the Association. This committee will allow both of our respective organizations to move forward and discuss issues important to ensuring the best possible education system in Alberta.

The recent agreement in principle reached between the Association and the Alberta government is a significant milestone that provides benefits for teachers, school boards, students and Albertans. Together, we have agreed on a solution to an issue that has been a burden to government and teachers for the past six decades. Through a shared vision and desire for a long-lasting solution, we have reached an agreement that will ensure the next generation does not have to deal with this problem.

I know much work remains to be done in order to implement the agreement. I am confident that the Association, along with government, wants the certainty, and stability offered by this agreement. In the spirit of improving our relationship with the Association, government commits to consulting with teachers on issues that will improve learning for Alberta's students. To that end, I look forward to our continued collaboration and shared efforts in creating the best possible education system for the 21st century.

Yours truly,



Ed Stelmach
Premier

*Frank,
Thank you for your
leadership during the
negotiations!
All the very best!
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cc: Honourable Ron Liepert
Minster of Education

All Government M.L.A.s

Alberta School Boards Association