

Strong Communities

July 10, 2008

Alberta's special education program to be reviewed***Steering committee to lead Setting the Direction for Special Education in Alberta project***

Edmonton... Alberta students will be the ultimate beneficiaries of a complete review of Special Education in Alberta to be led by a group of Albertans with broad experiences in related fields.

Edmonton-Ellerslie MLA Naresh Bhardwaj will chair a steering committee of 13 prominent Albertans that will review current research, best practices from other jurisdictions, and input from Albertans. Their work will result in a framework for a new special education policy with supporting accountability measures and a funding model. The project will touch all school types - public, separate, charter, private and Francophone.

“*Setting the Direction for Special Education in Alberta* is an important project for the students of Alberta,” said Dave Hancock, Minister of Education. “I am confident that the people appointed to the steering committee bring a breadth of knowledge, perspectives and experiences that will help improve our services to students with special needs.”

“The road ahead is a challenge, but with guidance from a good team, I’m confident that we’ll be presented with a more effective direction for special education in Alberta,” said Bhardwaj. “As a teacher, I’m looking forward to finding out more about what Albertans have to say about special education in this province.”

The Steering Committee will develop an interim report by September 2009, with a final report before September 2010. Their work will be supported by a Stakeholder Working Group that will include members from organizations representing parents, superintendents, teachers, health care professionals, disability associations and post-secondary education-related faculties.

There will be at least three phases of consultation during the project, with the first to be scheduled across the province this October.

Alberta schools serve approximately 67,000 students with special education needs.

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Attachment: Steering Committee member list and biographies

Media inquiries may be directed to:

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Setting the Direction for Special Education in Alberta Steering Committee Members and Biographies

Naresh Bhardwaj (Chair)	MLA, Edmonton-Ellerslie
Michael Bruised Head	Principal, Tatsikiisaapo'p Middle School, Kainai Board of Education
Judy Buddle	Community Member
Joanne Cuthbertson	Chancellor, University of Calgary
Dena Davis	Project Coordinator and Assistant Principal, The Way In
Shauna Gervais	Parent
Ron Gilbertson	President and CEO, Edmonton Economic Development Corporation
Sue Lynch	Adjunct Professor, Director Child Study Centre, University of Alberta
Bill McKeown	Vice-President, Canadian National Institute for the Blind
Brian Malloy, RPN, B.Ed. (H.Sc.)	Regional Director of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry and Suburban & Area Clinics, Capital Health's Regional Mental Health Program
Iris Saunders	Executive Director, Employabilities
Nancy Spencer-Poitras	Superintendent, Buffalo Trail School Division
Marie Whelan	Co-Principal, St. Mary School, Edmonton Catholic Schools

Naresh Bhardwaj **MLA, Edmonton-Ellerslie**

Naresh Bhardwaj was elected to his first term as a Member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta for Edmonton-Ellerslie on March 3, 2008. In addition to his duties as an MLA, Mr. Bhardwaj serves as a member of the Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing Committee, the Public Accounts Committee and the Standing Committee on Community Services.

Prior to serving as a Member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, Mr. Bhardwaj taught automotives at J. Percy Page high school and is a journeyman automotive mechanic.

An active part of Edmonton communities for over 30 years, Mr. Bhardwaj has served on many committees and associations, established Youth Link, a youth employment training program, and coaches soccer at the community league level and for Juventus U-18.

Mr. Bhardwaj is married with three children.

Michael Bruised Head **Principal, Tatsikiisaapo'p Middle School, Kainai Board of Education**

Michael Bruised Head will start the 2008-2009 school year as Principal of Tatsikiisaapo'p Middle School in Standoff, Alberta. He is transferring from Kainai High School where he was also Principal. Mr. Bruised Head has a long career as an educator and has been very involved in the development of Aboriginal curriculum and resources. He helped develop the program of studies for Aboriginal Studies 10, 20 and 30.

He is well respected as an educator in the First Nations, Metis and Inuit Community in Alberta.

Judy Buddle **Community Member**

Judy Buddle is an active community member and long-time volunteer. She served as a Trustee for Edmonton Catholic School Board for nine years and in that time served as Chair and Vice-Chair. During her tenure as Trustee, she represented Edmonton Catholic School Board as a Director for the Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association and on the Alberta School Boards Association.

Ms. Buddle was a recipient of the YMCA Woman of Vision award, and has had volunteer leadership positions with her parish council at St. Thomas More Parish, amateur athletic organizations, Girl Guides & Brownies, Parent Teacher Associations, the Lurana Shelter and the Friars.

Ms. Buddle has been married to Harry Buddle for over 44 years. Together they have raised nine children.

Joanne Cuthbertson Chancellor, University of Calgary

Joanne Cuthbertson is a passionate and unrelenting advocate for young people, public education and issues of quality of life in the community and has been involved in organizations with similar values all over Calgary as a volunteer, board member, mentor or champion.

Ms. Cuthbertson is Past-chair of EducationMatters-Calgary's Public Education Trust and continues to serve on EducationMatters' Granting Committee. She has had a long association with Hull Child & Family Services, serving as a past director, on Hull's successful "Creating Success ... Together" Campaign, and as an Honorary Patron of Hallelujah!

In 1997, Ms. Cuthbertson founded SPEAK, Support Public Education-Act for Kids and received the Calgary Award in Education for that year.

Dena Davis Project Coordinator and Assistant Principal, The Way In

Dena Davis is currently the Project Coordinator and Assistant Principal for The Way In, a mental health initiative between three junior high schools, government and non profit agency partners to improve preventative and wrap around services for students and their families.

Ms. Davis has taught for 23 years in a variety of settings including both urban and rural school districts, an aboriginal community school, regular junior high schools, and a correctional setting for young offenders. She has extensive background in programming for at risk students and students with special needs in segregated and inclusive settings as a classroom teacher and in leadership positions.

Shauna Gervais Parent

Shauna Gervais is a homemaker and a mother of two children. She has a university background in Speech Pathology and Special Education. Her oldest child has an Autism Spectrum Disorder for which Ms. Gervais received additional training from Glenrose Hospital staff and conference speakers such as Tony Attwood, Nathan Ory, Barry Prizant and Barbara Coloroso.

Over the past 10 years, she has witnessed the challenges and opportunities a special needs child may face within the public education system. She feels her background and life experiences will provide valuable input to help reshape special needs policy/education for the benefit of special needs children, their parents and educators alike.

Ron Gilbertson President and CEO, Edmonton Economic Development Corporation

Ron Gilbertson was appointed President and CEO of the Edmonton Economic Development Corporation in April 2007. Prior to joining EEDC, Mr. Gilbertson held a number of executive positions with business and industry in Alberta. These included President of Lacent Technologies, founding President and CEO of Edmonton Regional Airports Authority, senior executive with Alberta Research Council and a long career with Stanley Associates Engineering, now Stantec.

Mr. Gilbertson currently serves on the board of directors of TEC Edmonton and the Sawridge Group of Companies, and on the strategy council of the Mazankowski Heart Institute. He has been active with a number of community organizations including the Capital Region United Way, the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce, local community leagues, and the Edmonton Society for the Hearing Impaired.

Mr. Gilbertson has a Masters of Economics from the University of Manitoba, and he is an honours graduate from the College of Commerce at the University of Saskatchewan.

Sue Lynch Adjunct Professor, Director Child Study Centre, University of Alberta

Dr. Sue Lynch has worked in various capacities in the field of Early Childhood Education in the province of Alberta and elsewhere. She brings a wealth of administrative, academic and practical knowledge and experience to the Early Childhood programs at the University of Alberta, at both undergraduate and graduate levels. Her current role as the faculty director of the Child Study Centre places her in a unique position that brings theory and practice, families, children and early childhood professional together in a program that models alternative approaches to working with young children.

Bill McKeown Vice President, CNIB

Over a 30-year career at CNIB, Bill McKeown has accomplished much in the service of people with vision loss. In Alberta, he was an instrumental advocate for more comprehensive and enforceable changes to the Blind Persons Rights Amendment Act of 2004 which protects the rights of people with vision loss, particularly individuals with guide dogs.

Recognizing the enormous benefit of technology for people with vision loss, Mr. McKeown advocated for government funding, culminating in the Specialized Technical Equipment Program. He encouraged the provincial government to provide services for people who are deafblind, a most isolating disability and one not recognized or well served in this country. He has also co-chaired two conferences on the needs of children with vision loss and has worked on task forces for the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

Brian Malloy, RPN, B.Ed. (H.Sc.) Regional Director of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry and Suburban & Area Clinics, Capital Health's Regional Mental Health Program

Brian Malloy is the Regional Director of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry and Suburban & Area Clinics in Capital Health's Regional Mental Health Program. Mr. Malloy's education includes psychiatric nursing, education and administration. He has been the recipient of several awards, most recently the Capital Health Regional REACH Award for Distinction in Leadership (2006/07) and the Dr. Myer Horowitz Book Award (2005). He has extensive experience in both clinical and administrative leadership in the area of children's mental health.

Mr. Malloy's 30+ years of experience in the area of Mental Health has been primarily with child, adolescent and family psychiatry. He is familiar with both hospital and community front line and administrative roles through continuous progressive advancement within Capital Health. He provides leadership through multi-ministerial and inter-sectoral projects and committees at local, regional, provincial and national levels.

Mr. Malloy's passion is to provide quality, equitable and accessible services and education to children and families with mental health concerns. His vision for improving services and his long standing involvement in service planning, development and integration continue to positively influence the way services are delivered in the region.

Iris Saunders Executive Director, EmployAbilities

Iris Saunders is the Executive Director of EmployAbilities, a charitable organization dedicated to providing employment services to individuals with disabilities. She has an extensive background in supplying community based consultation and training workshops on issues related to the hiring of people with disabilities.

Ms. Saunders is a respected authority on employment issues of the disabled and is committed to fostering change and developing equality in the labour force. Currently, Ms. Saunders continues to be involved in many volunteer activities.

She is the recipient of awards from the University of Alberta - in support of the Chair for Deafness, Outstanding Services Award from National Access Awareness Week, the first recipient of the Lumina Award from the Learning Link in recognition of her contribution to excellence to learning and was

awarded Woman of Vision Award in 2004. Ms. Saunders was also nominated to YMCA's Women of Distinction Award and has received the Excellence in Innovation Award for the Call Centre Training Program.

Ms. Saunders also played an active role in the community's various professional organizations including: Glenora Rotary Club; Alberta Association of Fundraising Executives and CASE (Canadian Association Society of Executives).

Nancy Spencer-Poitras Superintendent, Buffalo Trail School Division

Nancy Spencer-Poitras became Superintendent of Buffalo Trail School Division after a long and exemplary tenure at Edmonton Public Schools (EPS). She has served as a school administrator of alternative programs, bilingual programs and special needs programs, and principal. She has also worked as a teacher and department head within several schools in EPS.

Ms. Spencer-Poitras has received numerous awards for her significant contribution to education. She was a recipient of the provincial Excellence in Teaching Award in 1996, received a Top 100 Business Education Partnerships Recognition Award for 1996-1997 and received both the greater Edmonton and provincial CSA 2006 Distinguished Leadership Award in 2006.

Marie Whelan Co-Principal, St. Mary School, Edmonton Catholic Schools

Marie Whelan is Co-Principal at St. Mary School. She is recognized as a leader who enjoys exploring the many possibilities that unfold when leading a progressive and innovative learning environment. St. Mary School is a Grade 2 - 6 learning community where personal academic success is encouraged and achieved. A partnership with Concordia College, Grant MacEwan and the University of Alberta through teacher education and research plays a significant role in the school's work with children.

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