

To: Honourable Adriana LaGrange
Minister of Education

Members of Executive Council
Executive Branch
228 Legislature Building
10800-97 Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

February 14, 2022

From: Lorna McIlroy
President, Alberta Retired Teachers' Association (ARTA)

Re: Proposal to remove the responsibility of the Alberta Teachers' Association to discipline teachers.

Dear Minister LaGrange,

On December 9, 2021, you announced your ministry's intention to strip the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) of its disciplinary responsibilities, effectively splitting the association in two. As retired teachers who have spent their careers invested in the growth and welfare of students, we agree that student safety should be a top priority in this province. But the argument you have put forth, that the ATA is ill-equipped to discipline its own members, is being made in bad faith. It represents the latest in a long list of attempts to undermine public education in this province. On behalf of the Alberta Retired Teachers' Association (ARTA), I ask that you reconsider this course of action and work with Alberta's teachers, instead of against them, if you truly wish to improve the safety and security of our schools.

For over a century, Alberta's teachers have been fighting to have our rights as professionals recognized and respected. This includes the ability to discipline our colleagues when allegations are raised against them. Since Alberta's teacher disciplinary system was first created, the ATA has worked closely with Alberta Education and followed the policies laid out in the Teaching Profession Act to deliver a disciplinary process that is swift, responsible, and transparent.

You point to a 2006 disciplinary case against an Alberta teacher as evidence of negligence in the ATA's disciplinary process. When allegations were raised against the teacher in question, the ATA heard them, removed the teacher from the classroom, suspended him from teaching, and reported the findings to Alberta Education. Your predecessors in the Progressive Conservative government accepted the suspension and took no further action. Later, further



allegations were made against the man, and while they were deeply troubling, the ATA fulfilled its mandate by removing him from the classroom. If there was a failure of justice on that day, as you have suggested, the responsibility should be equally shared by the ATA and by Alberta Education.

By pulling up this 15-year-old case and attempting to use it as evidence of the failure of the ATA's disciplinary efforts, you are leading the public to believe that the ATA's priority is to protect the jobs and reputations of dangerous teachers. This could not be further from the truth. If anything, teachers are more motivated than anyone to remove dangerous colleagues from the classroom. If a single teacher is allowed to remain in this profession after endangering students, the safety of all students suffers, as do the shared reputations of all teachers. It is in the self interest of all teachers to handle disputes quickly and without bias.

This is not to say that the disciplinary system in place today cannot be improved. Indeed, disciplinary processes should be reviewed periodically to ensure they are still serving the people they are meant to protect. But once again, you are attempting to cut teachers out of the process, removing them from decisions that greatly affect their lives and careers. If you think the current system is lacking, I implore you to work with our province's teachers to fix it, rather than treating this as an opportunity to discredit the teaching profession in the public eye.



Lorna McIlroy
President, ARTA

cc:

Jason Schilling, President ATA
Dennis Theobald, Executive Secretary, ATA
Daniel Mulloy, CEO, ARTA
Honourable Jason Kenney, Alberta Premier
Ms. Rachel Notley, MLA for Edmonton-Strathcona
Ms. Sarah Hoffman, MLA for Edmonton-Glenora

