

January 10, 2012

**Education Act consultations lead to 10-point plan
*Legislation will be introduced in spring; work on other projects
begins shortly***

Edmonton... Thousands of Albertans shared their ideas in recent consultations about education. Ideas raised in those sessions, as well as conversations with parent councils and education stakeholders, will form the basis for future legislation and prompted the development of a 10-point plan for Alberta's education system.

"Parents, teachers, students and others have given me two types of advice: philosophical approaches that are best addressed in legislation and practical solutions to the challenges students face every day. Legislation will come forward in the spring, and work on practical steps will begin immediately," said Thomas Lukaszuk, Minister of Education.

Seven full-day community meetings between November 26 and December 9 were attended by 1,130 Albertans. Participants included students, parents, teachers and education assistants, aides or support staff. Five Speak Out student forums were also held. In addition to the meetings, Albertans told government about their priorities by phone, through a website, by e-mail and regular mail, and through social media.

"Our intent for the consultation was to hear from those who may not have had an opportunity to share their vision for the Alberta education system. I want to extend my appreciation and a personal thank you to everyone who participated," said Lukaszuk. "The feedback from parents, students and teachers leaves me no doubt that this review was the right thing to do."

All thoughts and suggestions Albertans provided are now being analyzed, and will be considered during the drafting of new legislation to govern Alberta's education system, which will be introduced in the Legislature in spring 2012.

"The quality of the input was remarkable and the ideas generated from this consultation will shape a revised bill that reflects the innovation and leadership Albertans expect from their education system," said Lukaszuk.

The 10 new initiatives will be rolled out in the months ahead. Some are trial projects which may provide important lessons about efficiencies and better results and some may become longer term practices. Others will require formal policy consideration by government.

The 10-point plan for education includes:

- Reducing travel time for students who spend more than one hour on a bus and enabling students to better use technology when they travel.
- Creating more opportunities for students to earn credits in high school and post-secondary at the same time.
- Updating school design specifications to better support communities.
- Co-ordinating building playgrounds and new schools.
- Reducing the administrative burden for charter schools.
- Supporting First Nations students by working more closely with the federal government.
- Creating a stronger voice for parents in the education system.
- Providing better information to increase the transparency, clarity and accountability of the education system.
- Reviewing provincial achievement tests.
- Examining the operational requirements of full-day kindergarten.

“Albertans want the best possible learning opportunities and experiences for our students. Government’s commitment to revised legislation and this 10-point plan will make a real difference for students today and into the future,” said Lukaszuk.

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Backgrounder: 10-point plan for education

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Backgrounder

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10-point plan for education

As part of the government's commitment to education, 10 new initiatives will be launched in the months ahead:

Practical improvements to enhance students' experiences

- Reducing travel times for students who spend more than one hour on a bus will help improve the school experience. A trial project in one school division will identify bus route efficiencies and improve transportation services. Another trial will look at enabling students to better use technology when they travel.
- Creating more opportunities for students to earn credits in high school and post-secondary programs at the same time will help them be successful in their chosen career. A provincial dual credit strategy will be developed to help school boards develop stronger programs. Separately, a new project will provide apprenticeship training to teachers so they are better equipped to teach advanced dual credit courses in Career & Technology Studies.
- Updating design specifications will mean government can better support communities when we build new schools. New school design specifications will better accommodate health-related services, community sports programs, and wheelchair access.
- Developing a better process for building playgrounds at the same time as new schools will mean that children can be active sooner.

Stronger partnerships to set the right foundation for the future

- Reducing the administrative burden for established, effective charter schools will mean that they can focus on their students.
- Working with the federal government will better co-ordinate support for First Nations students. Our focus will be on enhancing literacy and numeracy skills, with a focus on students in Northland and band schools adjacent to Northlands.
- Creating a stronger voice for parents in the education system will supplement the work of school councils. Working with the Alberta School Councils' Association, new initiatives will be developed to strengthen parental input and new materials will support the department's online interaction with parents.
- Providing better information about what the school system is doing, accomplishing, and spending will increase transparency, clarity and accountability. More efficient and relevant reporting from school boards will help identify information and ways to present it that are useful for Albertans.

Reviews to set the stage for future decisions

- Reviewing provincial achievement tests, first so that we can find better ways to understand how students, schools, and the system are doing and

then so we can use that knowledge to improve students' success. The review will be launched by spring 2012, and provincial tests will continue for students in grades 3, 6 and 9 until the review is complete and any resulting changes are made.

- Reviewing the learning benefits of full-day kindergarten and identifying operational issues will help us better understand the implications of a possible future programming change.