

Teachers restore services to government

The Alberta Teachers' Association provincial executive council approved restoring services to the department of learning on September 26. While the April 19 good faith agreement ensured diploma exams would be marked by qualified teachers, restoration of services to the department was not a part of the agreement or the negotiations leading to it. In an article on the ATA web site, ATA President Larry Booi says further progress toward restoration became possible only after teachers had received concrete proof that the arbitration process was fair and were assured that issues relating to teaching and learning conditions would be meaningfully considered by the learning commission.

"By August, we were sufficiently confident that these requirements had been met and so we approached the department indicating our willingness to meet with the minister as early as possible to discuss resuming cooperation," says Booi. "The minister has said publicly that he has learned that he needs the support and assistance of teachers so that his department can do its job well," concluded Booi. "I am pleased to encourage teachers to provide that support and assistance once again."

Fewer health authorities on horizon?

"...sources have confirmed that the government caucus was presented with a plan during its annual retreat this week, which could lead to a substantial reduction in the number of Regional Health Authorities," reports Jim Armet in the September 13 *Armet Report*.

Armet says the proposal would see the number of health regions drop from 16 to six. Armet also reports a similar push for Child and Family Service Authorities --- and that the minister was scheduled to meet with co-chairs and CEOs to prepare them for a possible reduction in their numbers.

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Some Ontario boards eye prov. bargaining

Gerri Gershon, president of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) says some boards want to move to central bargaining because the provincial government has taken control of education financing, according to the September 30 OPSBA *Fast Reports*.

The Ontario government took over education taxation in 1998, but school boards in that province still negotiate teacher contracts locally.

Boards say they have little left to negotiate because key issues such as workload, class size and salaries are almost predetermined by the provincial funding formula.

The Avon Maitland District School Board proposed a move to provincial bargaining with the following

argument, "Since trustees have no control over revenue it makes sense to shift bargaining from the board table to a provincial bargaining model."

While Ontario teacher unions have consistently opposed provincial bargaining, Gershon says they follow a provincial strategy in their local bargaining. Gershon said any model would probably include some local bargaining in order to recognize there are different needs for different boards.

Wish George Walker a happy retirement

The ASBA staff gathered Sept. 30 to wish George Walker, former director of member services and longtime labour negotiator, a happy retirement after 15 years of service to the ASBA. Executive Director David Anderson thanked George for his dedicated service to school boards and his willingness to take on challenging special assignments over the past few years. After a brief holiday, George will return to the ASBA on a contract basis as manager of insurance.

Teacher quality report published by SAEF

Teacher quality questions, including the link between quality and student achievement, initial preparation and induction of teachers, supply and demand, personnel practices, professional development evaluation and compensation and incentives are addressed in this report written by Dr. Susan Phillips for the Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education. The report may be ordered from the SAEF <http://www.saeef.ca>