

The Honourable Ken Krawetz,
Minister of Education, Deputy Premier
Room 348, Legislative Building

2405 Legislative Drive
Regina, SK S4S 0B3

May 7, 2008

Dear Minister Krawetz;

Re: BILL 29: An Act to Amend the Education Act, 1995

I am writing to you on behalf of the Alberta Association for Community Living (AACL) and the many thousands of Alberta families who have sons and daughters with developmental disabilities who are members of our organization. We have been representing the interests of families with sons and daughters with developmental disabilities for over 50 years. It is disheartening after so many decades of struggles to improve the lives of our family members and to secure a greater degree of community inclusion than ever before, to see our neighbouring province ignore the voices of its by enacting regressive legislation.

Our Association has played an active role in Alberta in advancing inclusive education by working collaboratively with our provincial government to ensure the regular classroom is the first placement option for students with special needs. As a partner to teachers and schools we provide workshops on inclusive education, free consultation on curricular and instructional modifications and a summer institute on inclusive education for teachers, administrators and parents.

The positive outcomes of inclusive education for all students, including those with "intensive needs", are well established in research and practice. In addition we have contributed to the development of the guidelines for the concepts of learning teams in schools where parents are considered valued and necessary partners in their child's education. The Amendments to Saskatchewan's Education Act do not honour parental choice or parental collaboration that is so vital to the success of every student.

The harmful effects of segregated education for students with developmental disabilities are well established in the literature. The very noted increase in risk of abuse through segregation should be sufficient to secure the safety of vulnerable students by ensuring their inclusion in regular classrooms. Amendments to Education Acts should give parents hope and their children access to a quality education to enable a future with positive possibilities. The very idea of denying a child the opportunity to be included and forcing them to be segregated on the basis of cost or perceived effect on other students, particularly when applied to students with disabilities, is prejudicial and discriminatory.

Today students with significant developmental disabilities who have been included are assuming, across Canada, many valued roles in their communities from employee to entrepreneur. An inclusive education is the difference between a future life of meaning and a life diminished.

We urge you to reconsider the Amendments to Saskatchewan's Education Act and ensure every student with disabilities has the opportunity for an inclusive education.

Respectfully

Alberta Association for Community Living

Wendy McDonald
President

cc: National, Provincial & Territorial Associations for Community Living (ACL)