



**BC Association
for Community Living**

Supporting people with developmental disabilities and their families

May 7, 2008

The Honorable Ken Krawetz
Minister of Education,
Province of Saskatchewan
Room 348, Legislative Building 2405
Legislative Drive, Regina, SK S4S0B3

(Original to follow by post)

Via Fax: (306) 563-6144

Dear Minister Krawetz,

The British Columbia Association for Community Living (BCACL) is a provincial federation that advocates for children, youth and adults with developmental disabilities and their families to ensure justice, rights and opportunities in all areas of their lives. Inclusive Education has been a pillar of our work since BCACL was founded in 1955 and we are writing now to express our grave concern over the proposed amendments to section 178 of the Education Act of Saskatchewan.

Groups across Canada have worked long and hard advocating for the inclusive schools that we have today. Though we have come a long way since students were segregated based on their disability, we are constantly met with challenges that threaten our progress. The proposed changes to your province's Education Act threaten the progress that families in Saskatchewan have made towards inclusive education. The exclusionary language used in section 178 suggests that students with developmental disabilities are a burden to the education system, when in fact, extensive research has proved just the opposite: inclusion is the best policy for *all* students.

We would like to share with you our province's experiences with segregated schools and programs, which have meant inequitable access to necessary supports and separation of children from families and peers. Segregated education programs have not been successful in meeting the educational needs of students with developmental disabilities. There is a sad history of students being exiled from their peers and of the system's failure to include students with diverse needs resulting in long-term costs to society.

Within the last couple years in British Columbia, we have overcome many hurdles in our work towards an inclusive education system. Plans for segregated schools were proposed by our provincial government and, on a separate occasion, by a school board trustee. Both plans were abandoned because of an unprecedented demand from families around the province who formed a strong and public voice of opposition to the notion of segregation.



We are certain that families in Saskatchewan want nothing less for their children. We understand that calls for segregation are often rooted in desperation and, when funding is cut or the system is not working, segregation is often proposed as the best solution; however, as BC has learned, time and resources are best spent on improving inclusive education and not on removing students from their classrooms.

We urge you to reconsider this potential threat to good quality, inclusive education for students in Saskatchewan. We cannot afford to go back in time, ignoring research findings and the voices of community members who have experienced the positive impact of an inclusive education.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rory Summers', written in a cursive style.

Rory Summers
President, BC Association for Community Living

Cc: Provincial & Territorial Associations for Community Living (ACL)