

**SPEAKING NOTES  
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DEPUTY MINISTER OF EDUCATION**

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**ALBERTA SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION  
SPRING GENERAL MEETING**

**JUNE 8, 2010**

**9:15 AM**

**CAPRI HOTEL,  
3310 50<sup>TH</sup> AVENUE  
RED DEER, ALBERTA**

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**Government of Alberta** ■  
Education

- Thank you for inviting me to speak with you. I am looking forward to the dialogue that we will be engaging in today.
- But before I say anything else, I want to acknowledge the elephant in the room.
- You have had six days to look at the Steering Committee report on Inspiring Education.
- Given the theme for this general meeting, and your role as trustees, I am sure that one of the first things you did was turn to the section on governance.
- So let me make the elephant a little smaller.
- As both the Minister and the Premier have confirmed publicly, regardless of what was reported in the media before the report's release, it does not signify any intent to do away with boards.
- Rather it speculates about a possible enhanced role for board governors.
- One which better positions trustees as leaders in education rather than administrators or labour negotiators.
- Albertans want their trustees to chart the course – not row the boat.
- During the Inspiring Education dialogues, Albertans reaffirmed that community has an important role to play in any changes to the education system.
- They demonstrated support for public education that responds to community needs.
- They said they wanted governors to govern with real input from stakeholders and community members.
- I think that the great majority of Albertans see boards as an integral means for ensuring the education system reflects the needs and concerns of the community.
- I think that bodes well for the future of school boards in Alberta.
- They reaffirmed their support for local boards to determine the educational needs of the community and how best to deliver them.
- Having said that, the idea of governance teams is one that deserves to be fully explored.
- We have seen examples where Governance teams engaged a broad spectrum of expertise and perspectives from the communities you serve.

- We know that the coordination of community capacity and supports to students will ensure students are better prepared for success.
- Including representatives of those community supports and services in a governance team could have real value.
- The report's discussion of generative leadership deserves thorough discussion and analysis.
- Generative leadership relies on the kind of community engagement that people want and allows the community to come to a deeper understanding of the challenges, directions and expectations of our education system.
- The release of the Inspiring Education Steering Committee report, the release of the Setting the Direction report on June 11<sup>th</sup>, and the discussion document, Inspiring Action, which will be released on June 15<sup>th</sup>, provide perfect opportunities to continue the community based dialogues that Albertans want.
- And, given that this is an election year, you will have multiple opportunities available to you to make your ideas heard and to hear the ideas of those that you represent.
- I hope that as a result of your efforts in that regard, we will see far more interest in school board elections than we have seen in the past few years.
- Another area that has been commented on in the media is that of assessment.
- Some have speculated that we have seen the last of external assessments.
- That conclusion is premature.
- However, what we assess and how we assess is going to have to change as we develop new competency-based curricula.
- Learners must know and understand what is expected of them – assessment in all its forms contributes to that.
- Formative and summative assessment still have role to play in student success.
- Learners will continue to need the ongoing, timely feedback provided by assessment.
- Timely, relevant and meaningful assessment helps guide learning by providing the information needed to align learning strategies with learner needs
- Learners should have varied assessments that provide timely, authentic feedback to help them develop competencies.

- Teachers will need to be skilled and knowledgeable in the design, implementation and interpretation of assessments that contribute to greater learning.
- Achieving these goals will not be without challenges.
- There are references in Inspiring Education to ‘any time, any place at any pace’ learning. This may mean that assessment needs to be available on demand rather than regularly scheduled.
- I know you are likely to have a number of questions about what I have just said as well as the other items in the report and I look forward to doing that with you.
- I suspect that upon first reading, your response might have been that the report is all about destination with very little focus on route.
- And that is true.
- We don’t have the detailed roadmap to follow – but we know the direction we want to go.
- When it comes to transforming our education system, we will be explorers not travelers.
- By working together, we will create the path that others will follow.
- I will be the first to admit that this will be a real challenge.
- Albertans have told us they want an education system that adequately prepares students for the world of work, but which also encourages and enables them to be active citizens, with a strong ethical and moral base.
- They also want their schools to recognize diversity and to be inclusive of that diversity of students.
- A look at an imaginary school of 500 students shows how big that challenge is.
  - Of those 500 students:
    - 45 will be living below the poverty line
    - 15 will be in the care of the province
    - 40 will have a first language that is neither English or French
    - 25 will First Nations, Métis or Inuit (FNMI)
    - 40 will have a diagnosis of AD/HD
    - 25 will have identified learning disabilities
    - 15 will have cognitive disabilities
    - 8 will have severe behavioural/emotional issues
    - 7 will suffer from autism
    - 5 will have FASD

- at least one will have a physical disability
- That's 223 students with unique needs that must be met along with those of another 277 students who want engaging, relevant curriculum and the ability to learn any time, any place at any pace.
- Our work on Setting the Direction indicates that we need to 'design in' differentiated curricula to address multiple needs and learning modalities. We also need to consider how to support teachers with the skills and tools they need to address multiples student needs.
- Again, there is no roadmap for how we are going to achieve this.
- But all journeys of this kind begin with the why long before a discussion of the how.
- As Simon Sinek, author of *Start With Why*, points out, Martin Luther King Jr. gave an *I have a dream* speech not an *I have a 12-point plan* speech.
- His speech articulated a destination – it was the country's job to determine the route.
- As I was preparing for this meeting with you, I began to look for instances where the vision of the future clearly preceded the strategy of how to realize that future.
- I wanted to find an example where there was no roadmap to follow because it was something that people had never done before.
- One which required the kind of development of new skills, new approaches, innovative thinking and collaboration we will need to transform the K-12 education system in Alberta.
- I came up with this.
- In September 1962 speech, U.S. President John F. Kennedy made this statement about going to the moon.
- We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win.
- Think about that for a moment.
- Here was a U.S President saying that - just 61 years after the first aircraft flew a mere 120 feet in 12 seconds, - humans were capable of going to the moon.
- Borrowing from that statement, I will say this about the future of education.

- We will transform education because we must transform education.
- The transformation of education is the one best way we have of ensuring our success as a society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- Doing so will not be easy.
- Creating something of enduring value is never easy.
- Transforming education will require us to use the best of our energies and skills.
- We have no option but to succeed.
- Failure to do so would be to put the future of a generation of Alberta's students at risk.
- I chose the Kennedy speech because I know that for many people, the idea of going to the moon may seem easier than transforming education.
- There is no doubt the challenges we will face in doing so will be real and substantial.
- But let me go back to Kennedy's speech for a moment.
- If I were to say we shall send to the moon, 240,000 miles away . . . a giant rocket . . .made of new metal alloys, some of which have not yet been invented, capable of standing heat and stresses several times more than have ever been experienced. . . carrying all the equipment needed for propulsion, guidance, control, communications, food and survival, on an untried mission, to an unknown celestial body, and then return it safely to earth, . . do all this, and do it right, and do it first before this decade is out--then we must be bold.
- And I chose this passage for that last word.
- To transform education, we too must be bold.
- Transformation of education is not a task for the faint of heart.
- Transformation of education is not without risk.
- The first thing we must do is believe.
- We must believe that transformation is necessary and we must believe that it can be achieved.
- That belief will draw to us those who also believe in transformation.

- By doing so we will create a critical mass of ability and expertise that will enable us to overcome the challenges we will face.
- That belief will sustain us when we falter or fail.
- And that belief will be strengthened every time we succeed.
- The release of the Inspiring Education Steering Committee report and Inspiring Action are but one small step toward transformation.
- By working together, we can - and will - make a giant leap toward the future.
- Thank you.