

The Honourable Demetrios Nicolaides
Minister of Education
228 Legislature Building
10800 - 97 Avenue
Edmonton, AB
T5K 2B6

March 21, 2024

Dear Minister Nicolaides;

Re: Teacher Complaint Disciplinary Process

On behalf of the Board of Trustees for Grande Yellowhead Public School Division (GYPSD), please accept this letter in advocacy for a review of the discipline process when Alberta Education's registrar receives a complaint of alleged unprofessional conduct or professional incompetence.

As you are know, in December 2022, former Education Minister LaGrange introduced [Bill 15](#) and established the [Alberta Teaching Profession Commission](#) to oversee disciplinary matters for teachers.

The commission reviews and investigates complaints of alleged unprofessional conduct and professional incompetence filed against Alberta-certificated teachers and teacher leaders. This includes teachers who are members of the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) and those not part of the ATA: teachers at independent (private), public charter, and First Nations schools), superintendents, and other teacher leaders working in school board offices, and teachers or teacher leaders who are no longer practicing.

Since taking over Teacher Discipline in January, 2023, the commission has indicated to stakeholders that the **first step** in addressing a complaint or concern is to work within the school authority to resolve the issues at the local level, as school authorities have guidelines and processes in place. The commission **then** states that "if the issue is not resolved at the local level", a stakeholder should contact the Office of the Registrar to discuss the concern before submitting a complaint, if warranted.

Experiential evidence and anecdotes shared at Board Organization and College of Alberta School Superintendents meetings suggest that many complainants are not engaging in the first or second steps outlined above. Educators are not aware there is any issue or concern with a stakeholder until they receive notice a complaint has been filed with the Registrar. At this point, the complaint investigation process is engaged. More worrisome is that the complaint investigation process and resolution may take up to two years.

Until an investigation into the allegation of unprofessional conduct or professional incompetence has been conducted and a resolution has been determined, the accused individual is left in a career vacuum. Probationary teachers cannot move forward. Teachers wanting to take on new roles cannot move forward. A teacher with an allegation about their professional practice is made public. Their reputation and mental health are at risk. As you know, there is an alarming shortage of teachers in rural communities, and overall, more teachers are exiting the profession due to challenging and complex classroom behaviours and stakeholder demands.

Most alarmingly, however, the cases of *genuine* misconduct or incompetence that are most harmful to students are buried beneath layers of complaints that are frivolous, vexatious, or without merit. Nevertheless, under the current process model, they still require the full attention and resources of the commissioner's office.

We strongly support the safety of our students and staff. Alerting system leaders to concerning behaviors is essential to the health, effectiveness, and trust of the system. However, a complaint against a professional should be addressed promptly.

Thank you for your consideration of this request for a review of the process.

Sincerely,

Dale Karpluk

[Dale Karpluk \(Apr 1, 2024 11:32 MDT\)](#)

Dale Karpluk, Board Chair (Jasper)

Cc: Board of Trustees
Mr. Jason Schilling, President, Alberta Teachers' Association
Ms. Jessica Smeall, President, Evergreen Local #11, Alberta Teachers' Association
Mr. Martin Long, MLA for West Yellowhead
Mr. Shane Getson, MLA for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland
Dr. Carolyn Lewis, Superintendent of Schools

