



BCCPAC input on the review of the B.C College of Teachers

BCCPAC appreciates the opportunity to provide input on the review of the B.C. College of Teachers.

Schools promote and encourage learning by providing children with a stimulating, enriching and safe environment. In order to accomplish this objective, schools must also ensure that educators are highly skilled and that their conduct is exemplary.

Parents recognize that teacher quality is the single most important factor in improving student achievement, and that the College can perform a critical role in this regard. Don Avison's report reveals that the College is failing to fulfill this role, and children are bearing the consequences of this failure.

A critical question for each of us to consider is whether or not the College can be "fixed", or whether its functions need to be taken over by government. We are of the view that changes can be made to remove political interference and to expand the role of the College through amendments to the *Teaching Profession Act*. In this way, we can retain openness and transparency in the management of conduct and competency. The protection of children can become, once again, the primary focus of the College.

In 2002, the Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education published a report, "Teacher Quality in Canada". In the Executive Summary of the Report, several broad recommendations were made:

- Evaluation and improvement of teacher preparation programs, based on research and practice;
- Widespread establishment of teacher mentoring and induction programs;
- Organization of hiring and assignment practices to support teacher quality assurance;
- On-going, school-embedded professional development designed for its impact on student learning;
- Regular evaluations throughout a teacher's career that are focused on quality recognition and control; and
- Experimentation with compensation incentives to encourage productivity and the application of specialized skills and knowledge.

Many of these recommendations, with which we concur, are still entirely relevant and would fall under the purview of the College.

Question 1 – In what way and in what manner would you like to see the four functions of a regulatory body improved?

The College already has the mandate to make some of the changes outlined in Don Avison's report. This includes:



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- 1. Improvements to the manner in which person complaints are handled.** We concur with Avison's comment, "The College of Teachers appears content to leave the burden on the shoulders of complainants who most often lack the resources, the expertise and the capacity necessary to see the matter through." There is a profound lack of communication with parents who have made complaints, and no accountability for how complaints are handled. Furthermore, complaints are not handled in a timely manner, and this often negates the very purpose of making a complaint.
- 2. Changes to processes for handling complaints and reports of misconduct and incompetence.** The Preliminary Investigation Sub-Committee should not retain control of the vast majority of cases, nor should the discipline imposed continue to consider the interests of the member ahead of the public interest. The College needs clear guidelines for handling misconduct and incompetence in a fair and timely manner, for conducting investigations, for issuing citations and for increased public reporting.
- 3. Adoption of the role of regulating and addressing teacher competence.** As Avison noted, "Regrettably, the College of Teachers has failed to occupy these areas of activity and there remains a considerable level of resistance to even considering professional development and currency of practice as matters that should represent a core aspect of the College's obligation to protect and advance the public interest." We strongly agree that these are key roles that must be undertaken by the College. We also note that discipline case summaries only use the term "incompetent" when it is accompanied by a medical condition, and that some cases might be more properly labeled as misconduct. The College should develop guidelines for the use of either term.
- 4. Review and revision to "The Standards for the Education, Competence and Professional Conduct of Educators in British Columbia".** As Avison noted, aspects present in the original standards have been lost in the current version. In addition, the current standards require revision to capture changes to the role of the College.
- 5. Comprehensive review of teacher education programs.** In 2008, the Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education published a wide-ranging report, "Teacher Education in Canada" that highlighted many issues, and could act as a starting point for review. It is worth noting that the Executive Summary states, "Graduate ratings of program content showed significant discrepancies between emphasis (lower) and usefulness (higher) in areas such as classroom management, using assessment, motivating students, teaching special needs children, and dealing with parents and the community."
- 6. Revisions to the online registry so that it is timely, provides adequate information, and is easy to use.** Currently, the circumvention of formal discipline, the length of time it takes for the College to adjudicate, and the fact that almost half of the cases are published without names completely undermine the purpose of the registry.



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7. **Changes to the composition and public reporting of the Fitness Investigation Sub-Committee (FISC).** FISC hearing panels should include laypersons, and reports of panels should be available in a manner similar to discipline case summaries.
8. **Discipline hearing panels that are open to the public.** In Ontario, hearings are open to the public, and this should also occur at the College. To do so would greatly increase the College's transparency and openness.

2. **Are there additional functions and responsibilities that a regulatory body for teachers should assume?**

In order for the College to assume a regulatory function, free from political interference, and to align itself with other regulatory bodies, some fundamental changes are required. These include:

1. **Appointment of council members by Order-in-Council.** Avison's report states, "...it is recommended that the public interest is more likely to be met if all positions on the College Council are filled by Order-in-Council appointment with candidates selected on the basis of merit and for the skill sets they can bring to the work of the Council." We concur with this recommendation.
2. **Inclusion of more parents on the College Council.** Currently, there are only two parents on council. We recommend that this number be increased to ensure that the interests of children are better protected. As well, we believe that the number of community members on Council should also be increased.
3. **Expansion of the person complaint process to include matters of competence.** While parents may not have the professional expertise to investigate matters of competence, they certainly recognize incompetence when they see it.
4. **Compulsory professional upgrading.** Teacher quality is the single most important factor in improving student achievement. Mandating of this requirement may require amendments to the *Teaching Profession Act* in regards to admission and certification of members.
5. **Expansion of the online registry to include information on professional background and upgrading, and to include notification of a citation when it has been issued to a member.** Sharing information on professional background and upgrading enhances the professional status of teachers. Linking the registry to citations provides a measure of protection while a report or complaint works its way through process.



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6. **Development of an independent appeal process for discipline decisions.** Currently, there is no appeal of any decision of the council by anyone other than the member through the court system. Parents, the public, school districts and authorities should have the ability to appeal a decision on a report or complaint.
7. **Mandating the issuance of citations for serious misconduct.** Currently, the decision to issue a citation is made by the Preliminary Investigation Sub-Committee. There are no criteria to guide PISC in making this determination, and no circumstances under which issuance of a citation is mandatory, other than the refusal by a member to undergo a criminal record check. PISC is able to keep disciplinary action to itself simply by not issuing citations. PISC should have a preliminary function only, as its name suggests, and agreements and hearings should be the purview of the entire Council. The proper use of citations would ensure that this occurs.
3. **In what way would you suggest the object of a regulatory body be expressed in order to best serve the public interest?**

As it is currently written, the “Object” of the College is obscure and confusing. We would recommend that it be simplified, and respectfully suggest:

“The object of the college is to act in the public interest through the regulation of the teaching profession.”