



**MINISTER
OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

Room 168
Legislative Building
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 0V8
CANADA

Dr. Janice MacKinnon
Mr. Clayton Manness
Co-Chairs
Manitoba Commission on K-12 Education
470-800 Portage Avenue
Winnipeg MB R3G 0N4

Dear Dr. MacKinnon and Mr. Manness:

On March 12, 2019 the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth published and released the Special Report, *A Place Where It Feels Like Home: The Story of Tina Fontaine*. Of the several recommendations contained in the report is one which has been directed to the Manitoba Commission on Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education. It is as follows:

On January 23, 2019, the Manitoba government announced it was establishing a commission to conduct a review of kindergarten to Grade 12 education in the province. In addition to a sitting MLA, the commission consists of eight individuals, “who will lead public consultation and stakeholder engagement” (Manitoba News Releases, 2019, para. 4). One of the co-chairs for the commission noted that the “focus will be on student outcomes, long-term sustainability and enhanced public confidence” (ibid., para. 7). The education commission is expected to provide the Minister of Education and Training with a report, including key findings and recommendations by February 2020. Given the long-established and growing evidence concerning the detrimental impact of absenteeism and suspensions, these are essential issues for the Manitoba Commission on Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education to examine and report on publicly.

RECOMMENDATION ONE: The Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth recommends that Manitoba Education and Training ensure its recently established Commission on Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education review the measurement of and response to absenteeism across Manitoba. It is further recommended that the Commission review the use of out-of-school suspensions and

expulsions, with the goal of developing a province-wide strategy to limit, reduce, and phase-out exclusionary practices, except in situations of imminent safety risk to students and staff. This review and strategy should provide evidence-informed practices that are in line with the best interests of the child and respect the right to education for children and youth.

Details:

- The Commission to identify how school divisions can be resourced with the capacity to measure, assess, and respond to the underlying causes of school absenteeism. Building and sustaining relationships with students who are experiencing absenteeism and their families.
- Manitoba Education and Training continue efforts to improve student attendance by increasing public awareness of the right to education, identifying improvements to communication with parents and guardians around absenteeism, and to provide transparent information to the public about suspensions and expulsions.”

The entire report can be found at manitobaadvocate.ca/wp-content/uploads/MACY-Special-Report-March-2019-Tina-Fontaine-FINAL1.pdf

Per the request of the Advocate, Manitoba Education and Training asks that the Commission consider the recommendation as part of its comprehensive system review of Kindergarten to Grade 12 education. Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

Kelvin Goertzen
Minister
Education and Training

c. Grant Doak, Deputy Minister
Jean-Vianney Auclair, Secretariat Director