



NORTHERN SPIRIT
REGIONAL COUNCIL
THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA



A Pastoral Letter from Regional Alberta United Church Leaders

regarding the provincial government's invocation of the notwithstanding clause in their labour dispute with the Alberta Teachers Association.

*The following pastoral letter is from Chinook Winds Region's Presider, **Rev. Taylor Croissant** and Executive Minister **Treena Duncan** and Northern Spirit Region's President **Rev. Leigh Sinclair** and Executive Minister **Rev. Shannon McCarthy**.*

November 4, 2025

Peace to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

We offer this letter to the membership of The United Church of Canada within the Province of Alberta to share our concern about the provincial government's invocation of the notwithstanding clause in their labour dispute with the Alberta Teachers Association.

We know our church to be a big tent as the second largest religious denomination in the province, the people in our pews hold a range of views across the political spectrum. Christ calls us to live in diversity with one another, for we are all made in God's image. Our communities of faith are also made up of parents, children, and those employed in the vocation of teaching. The ministry personnel of our Regional Councils have shared the challenge of speaking to this issue of public affairs while weighing the competing needs of the members of our congregations. We can therefore sympathize with the weight that is upon the Government of Alberta and the Alberta Teachers Association in their negotiations, and our intention with this letter is not to take a partisan side.

The concept of public education originates with our Presbyterian spiritual ancestors, and so our hope is for an outcome that provides the best possible education for the children and youth of Alberta. As a church, our prayers continue to be for peace in our society, and mutual prosperity for all. We are concerned that the course of action the Alberta government has taken has not properly considered the learning conditions for children



and youth in Alberta classrooms, and that their choice of recourse has imperiled the rights of every Albertan.

The Notwithstanding Clause and Its Consequences

On October 27, the Legislature of Alberta passed Bill 2, to impose a contract on the striking teachers. In doing so the government invoked Section 33 of the Canadian constitution, the notwithstanding clause, specifically to exempt Section 2 of The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the freedom of association.

Section 2 of the Charter also includes the freedom of religion. We write today with a concern for the outcomes of public education in this province, but also out of concern regarding the exemption of section 2 of The Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The Reformed tradition of Christianity has experienced violent repression from the government in our past. Our Puritan spiritual ancestors migrated to this continent because they would not be forcibly conformed to the practices of the state church of England. Our church was forged in the desire for religious freedom.

The original insertion of Section 33 into the Canadian constitution was done so with the understanding that it be used only in circumstances of dire emergency. The pre-emptive invocation of the notwithstanding clause in legislation to address a labour irritation, specifically exempting section 2 of the Charter, imperils the future of our freedom of religion. If not from this government, then from a future Alberta government. Premier Smith can make assurances that this would never happen, but she can only make such a promise for her own government.

A Call for Reconsideration and Respectful Resolution

Therefore, with concern for the rights of Alberta's children and youth for an education that best fosters in them a desire for life long learning and the skills for a prosperous future, the rights of free association for teachers in this province, and concern for the precedent that has been set regarding section 2 of the Charter and the future of our own freedom of religion. We hope that the Alberta government would reverse its decision on the use of the notwithstanding clause, and to pursue other avenues to



**NORTHERN SPIRIT
REGIONAL COUNCIL**
THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA



resolve the labour dispute with the Alberta Teachers Association. We consider the use of the notwithstanding clause to be far too heavy handed, and has potentially jeopardized the future of every right that is listed in The Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

In God's grace, may our legislators find a new resolution of the teachers strike that is grounded in mutual respect and to the benefit of all Alberta students.

Yours in Christ,

The Rev. Taylor Croissant,

Presider, Chinook Winds Regional Council

The Rev. Leigh Sinclair

President, Northern Spirit Regional Council

Treena Duncan

Executive Minister, Chinook Winds Regional Council

The Rev. Shannon McCarthy

Executive Minister, Northern Spirit Regional Council