

## **Minister Casey's Letter:**

There have been recent reports regarding video correspondence courses offered through Drake University. It is important that comments and opinions be based on fact, and the following is being shared for that purpose.

Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa, is a respected, accredited university, and offers undergraduate and graduate degrees. It also offers video correspondence courses that are delivered via DVD.

Concerns regarding correspondence courses from Drake University were brought to my attention early in my mandate. It was also brought to my attention that the Advisory Council to the Minister on Teacher Certification had received similar concerns as early as November 2012.

At that time, there was a motion to place a moratorium on the pre-approval for teachers to use this course for upgrades to their teacher certification, pending a review of the courses. However, no action was taken by the minister at that time (2012), no review was conducted, and pre-approvals continued to be granted.

When this information was brought to my attention, I acted immediately, put a moratorium on pre-approvals, and called for a review, including an assessment of the quality and rigour associated with the DVD courses in question. This was effective Feb. 19.

The review concluded correspondence courses are delivered via DVD, with little or no instructor-student interaction. In addition, the DVDs are not developed by Drake University; they are purchased from outside vendors.

The review also revealed the DVD courses are not accepted by any Nova Scotia university for transfer credit. Based on the results of this review, I announced, effective Feb. 19, that there would be no further pre-

approvals for teachers to use the DVD courses from Drake University for certificate upgrades.

I raised the question of pre-approvals prior to Feb. 19. After requesting more information, I discovered the pre-approvals were granted in good faith and in accordance with the regulations that existed at the time. They were final administrative decisions that cannot be revoked or changed.

I have corresponded with the president of the Nova Scotia Teachers' Union, as an important education partner, to have the union encourage its members to enrol in high-quality education programs related to the needs of the Nova Scotia students. It is my expectation that the union will work with the department and school boards to ensure funds available for teacher professional development will be used to best meet those needs.

As minister, I am currently reviewing the mandate of the Minister's Advisory Council on Teacher Certification to make it more accountable and effective. Any new courses introduced for consideration will come to the minister for decision, rather than from the advisory committee. This is an attempt to ensure situations like this do not occur again.

**Karen Casey**

Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development