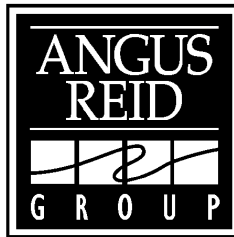

**-- CALGARIANS GIVE TOP GRADES TO ALBERTA'S LEARNING MINISTER
FOR FIRING THE ENTIRE CALGARY BOARD OF EDUCATION--**

**-- OVER 7-IN-10 CALGARIANS SIDE WITH LEARNING MINISTER LYLE OBERG'S DECISION TO DISMISS
THE ENTIRE ELECTED BOARD --**

-- AWARENESS OF THE CONTROVERSY IS VERY HIGH AMONG CALGARY VOTERS --



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This citywide Angus Reid Group poll is based on a telephone survey of a random sample of adult Calgarians. The survey was conducted between August 20th and 24th, 1999 among a representative cross-section of 400 respondents.

These data were statistically weighted to ensure the sample's gender and age composition reflects that of the actual Calgary population according to 1996 Census data.

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-- AWARENESS OF THE BOARD CONTROVERSY IS VERY HIGH AMONG CALGARY VOTERS --

On August 19, 1999, Alberta Learning Minister, Lyle Oberg, put an end to the infighting by members of the Calgary Public School Board, and in so doing, ignited a controversy of his own. The Minister fired all seven elected board members, replacing them with an appointed interim Trustee to manage affairs until by-elections are held in November. In making this move, Oberg has decisively dealt with the Calgary Board's inability "get along", but at the same time, the decision has drawn some editorial fire about the implications of ministerial prerogative interceding over democratic expressions of the public will.

The Angus Reid Group asked Calgarians for their take on Minister Oberg's actions – the first scientific measurement of the public's views on the matter. Here we find Calgarians offer a solid endorsement for Mr. Oberg with over seven-in-ten (71%) saying the Minister's actions were justified and proper. Our survey also finds that nearly eight-in-ten (77%) Calgarians have followed the public trials and tribulations of the Board over the last month, culminating in their ouster by the Minister.

These are the highlights gleaned from a Calgary-wide Angus Reid Group, Inc. telephone survey of 400 adult respondents. Interviews were conducted between August 20th and August 24th, 1999. A sample size of 400 is said to have a corresponding margin of error of ± 4.9 percentage points, nineteen times out of twenty.

OVER 7-IN-10 CALGARIANS SIDE WITH LEARNING MINISTER LYLE OBERG'S DECISION TO DISMISS THE ENTIRE ELECTED BOARD

Our August sample of adult Calgarians was presented with a brief description of the facts related to the dismissal of the seven trustees elected to the Calgary Public School Board. With this information in hand, survey respondents were offered two prompted competing arguments surrounding the matter, and asked which point of view best reflected their own feelings on the situation. The exact wording of the question was as follows:

“As you may or may not have heard, recently provincial Learning Minister, Lyle Oberg, dismissed the entire seven member Calgary Public School Board. Mr. Oberg said the Board was not functioning in a satisfactory manner, and replaced them with a single appointed trustee until by-elections can be held sometime around the New Year. Which of the following two broad points of views best describes your own on this issue?”

- *Some/Other people say that the Learning Minister was RIGHT to dismiss the school board because the board's infighting meant they weren't doing their job.*
- *Some/Other people say that the Learning Minister was WRONG to dismiss the board because trustees were elected by the public and the minister is over-riding democracy.*

Calgarians offer a strong endorsement for the Learning Minister in our August poll, with seven-in-ten (71%) saying he was right to dissolve the Board, compared to only one-quarter (23%) who believe the dismissals were an improper exercise of his ministerial powers. Another 4% of those interviewed do not feel that either prompted statement captures their sentiments accurately, while 2% are unsure. **(SEE TABLE 1)**

- One of the interesting characteristics of support for the Learning Minister is the lack of variation across different demographic segments. Looking across breaks for age, education, gender and status as a parent, differences in support for Mr. Oberg's actions are only nominal.
- Support for the Board's dismissal is modestly higher among those in the highest income category (\$70,000 + household earnings per year).

Among those who side with the Minister's actions, a majority (51%) cite, on an unprompted basis, the Board's inability to function as the main driver for their views. Others pointed to the personal fighting and bickering (23%) as just cause, while some use Woo-Paw's own words, describing the Board as

“dysfunctional” (16%) and others characterize the trustees’ behaviour as “childish” (11%). Other spontaneous comments express that the time was right for “someone to put their foot down” on the Board’s behaviour, and that the quality of education would suffer and tax dollars would be wasted if the Board continued. **(SEE TABLE 2A)**

On the other side of the question, those who took issue with the Minister’s actions maintain that the matter could have been handled in a more democratic fashion (62%) or that a bad elected board is still better than an appointed trustee (19%). Others in this camp believe that Mr. Oberg may have acted hastily (17%) and should have taken more time or that a mediator should have been brought in (6%). **(SEE TABLE 2B)**

AWARENESS OF THE BOARD CONTROVERSY IS VERY HIGH AMONG CALGARY VOTERS

According to our August survey, Calgarians are well aware of the controversy involving the Calgary Public School Board and Minister Lyle Oberg. Prior to discussing any question related to the appropriateness of the Minister’s actions, our polling opened with a query asking Calgarians if they had seen, heard or read anything involving the Calgary Board of Education and provincial Learning Minister, Lyle Oberg in the past month – fully 77% have. **(SEE TABLE 3A)**

- Awareness of issues involving the Calgary Public School Board and Learning Minister Lyle Oberg tends to increase with the age, income and education of survey respondents.

When asked about the content of the information, this group of Calgarians offers considerable detail about the matter on an open-ended basis. Over eight-in-ten (81%) who had heard of any controversy accurately note that the Minister fired the Board. Others paint a picture of a “childish” (19%) and “dysfunctional” (7%) board, with other responses noting that responsibilities will be assumed by an appointed trustee (5%) and by-elections are planned (1%). Only 5% of those who said they had heard about anything involving the Calgary Public School Board and the provincial Learning Minister raise the peripheral issue of funding, while 9% mention various other concerns. **(SEE TABLE 3B)**

Commenting on the survey results, Tim Olafson, Senior Vice President for the Angus Reid Group, noted:

“For the most part, Calgary voters do not see Lyle Oberg’s actions as an encroachment on the democratic process, rather it is viewed as an exceptional case, not a precedent-setting one. This is a very salient issue in Calgary and public sentiment, expressed by Calgarians from all walks of life, is that the board was elected to do a job and if personal or ideological impasses prevent them from doing that job, they should be fired. The Learning Minister took a bold move – he essentially nullified the outcome of a popular vote – but as far as most Calgarians are concerned, he did it for the right reasons and they endorse it.”

- 30 -

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TABLE 1 – CALGARIANS TAKE SIDES ON PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARD FIRING

“As you may or may not have heard, recently provincial Learning Minister, Lyle Oberg, dismissed the entire seven member Calgary Public School Board. Mr. Oberg said the Board was not functioning in a satisfactory manner, and replaced them with a single appointed trustee until by-elections can be held sometime around the New Year. Which of the following two broad points of views best describes your own on this issue?”

- *Some/Other people say that the Learning Minister was RIGHT to dismiss the school board because the board’s infighting meant they weren’t doing their job.*
- *Some/Other people say that the Learning Minister was WRONG to dismiss the board because trustees were elected by the public and the minister is over-riding democracy.*

| | TOTAL | GENDER | | AGE | | | EDUCATION | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|
| | | Male | Female | 18 - 34 | 35 - 54 | 55+ | HS or Less | Post Sec. | Univ. + |
| Base: All Respondents Weighted % | (400) % | (200) % | (200) % | (130) % | (193) % | (73) % | (105) % | (111) % | (183) % |
| Right Thing – Dismiss Board | 71 | 73 | 69 | 74 | 68 | 70 | 69 | 72 | 71 |
| Wrong Thing – Over-rides Election | 23 | 22 | 24 | 22 | 25 | 22 | 24 | 18 | 25 |
| (Neither) | 4 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 3 |
| (Unsure) | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 5 | 1 |

TABLE 1 CONTINUED

| | TOTAL | INCOME | | | | HAVE CHILDREN (Under 18) | |
|--------------------------------------|------------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|
| | | \$<30K | \$30 – 50K | \$50 – 70K | \$70K + | Yes | No |
| Base: All Respondents Weighted % | (400) % | (68) % | (102) % | (64) % | (116) % | (118) % | (194) % |
| Right Thing – Dismiss Board | 71 | 65 | 70 | 63 | 77 | 68 | 72 |
| Wrong Thing – Over-rides Election | 23 | 25 | 25 | 29 | 18 | 25 | 23 |
| (Neither) | 4 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 3 |
| (Unsure) | 2 | 5 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 2 |

TABLE 2A – OPEN ENDED DRIVERS OF SUPPORT FOR OBERG’S ACTION*“Why do you say that?” (Minister was RIGHT to dismiss the Board)*

| | TOTAL |
|--|------------|
| Base: Believe Oberg’s action was Right Weighted % | (282) % |
| The Board isn’t doing their job – deserve to be fired | 51 |
| Too much bickering – not getting along | 23 |
| Board is dysfunctional | 16 |
| Trustees acting like children | 11 |
| Someone had to put their foot down – stop the nonsense | 5 |
| Affecting quality of education for children | 4 |
| Wasting tax dollars | 4 |
| Passing notes foolish | 3 |
| Affecting the school system negatively | 3 |
| Can’t wait until next election to get rid of them | 3 |
| Board being selfish – only thinking of themselves | 3 |
| Board wasting everyone’s time | 1 |
| Other | 7 |
| (Unsure) | 4 |

(Unprompted Responses – Multiple Responses Possible)

TABLE 2B – OPEN ENDED DRIVERS OF OPPOSITION FOR OBERG’S ACTION

“Why do you say that?” (Minister was WRONG to dismiss the Board)

| | TOTAL |
|--|-----------|
| Base: Believe Oberg’s action was Wrong Weighted % | (93) % |
| Should have been more democratic method – over-ruling democracy | 62 |
| Elected by voters – should not be replaced by appointee | 19 |
| It was done too quickly | 17 |
| Should have brought in a mediator | 6 |
| Other | 15 |

(Unprompted Responses – Multiple Responses Possible)

TABLE 3A – PUBLIC AWARENESS OF CALGARY PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARD – OBERG CONTROVERSY*“In the past month, have you seen, heard or read anything involving the Calgary Public School Board and provincial Learning Minister Lyle Oberg?”*

| | TOTAL | GENDER | | AGE | | | EDUCATION | | |
|--|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | | Male | Female | 18 - 34 | 35 - 54 | 55+ | HS or Less | Post Sec. | Univ. + |
| Base: All Respondents Weighted % | (400) % | (200) % | (200) % | (130) % | (193) % | (73) % | (105) % | (111) % | (183) % |
| Yes – heard, seen or read something | 77 | 78 | 76 | 66 | 82 | 91 | 66 | 77 | 84 |
| No – have not | 22 | 22 | 23 | 34 | 18 | 8 | 34 | 22 | 16 |
| (Unsure) | 1 | -- | 1 | -- | -- | 1 | -- | 1 | -- |
| TABLE 3A CONTINUED | | | | | | | | | |
| | TOTAL | INCOME | | | | HAVE CHILDREN (Under 18) | | | |
| | | \$<30K | \$30 – 50K | \$50 – 70K | \$70K + | Yes | No | | |
| Base: All Respondents Weighted % | (400) % | (68) % | (102) % | (64) % | (116) % | (118) % | (194) % | | |
| Yes – heard, seen or read something | 77 | 70 | 74 | 76 | 84 | 71 | 77 | | |
| No – have not | 22 | 28 | 26 | 24 | 16 | 29 | 22 | | |
| (Unsure) | 1 | 2 | -- | -- | -- | -- | 1 | | |

TABLE 3B – SPECIFIC CONTENT OF INFORMATION SEEN, HEARD OR READ ABOUT BOARD/MINISTER*“What have you heard?”*

| | TOTAL |
|--|------------|
| Base: Seen, heard or read something about PSB/Minister Weighted % | (313) % |
| Oberg fired the School Board | 81 |
| School Board fighting between themselves – acting like children | 19 |
| School Board dysfunctional | 7 |
| Funding – budget issues | 5 |
| Appointee will run things until by-elections | 5 |
| By-elections going to be held | 1 |
| Making changes (unspecified) | 1 |
| Other | 9 |
| Nothing | 1 |
| (Unsure) | 3 |

(Unprompted Responses – Multiple Responses Possible)