

## The Agreement on Internal Trade and what it means for teacher certification in BC

### What is the AIT?

On December 5, 2008 the trade ministers of the provinces and territories approved the final text of the Agreement on Internal Trade (AIT). This agreement was signed with the intention of breaking down the trade and labour mobility barriers that exist across Canada within areas of provincial jurisdiction. Chapter 7 of this agreement deals with labour mobility. The effect of this chapter is that the College will be required to issue a certificate to any teacher who holds a current certificate in any jurisdiction in Canada without the teacher having to complete any additional assessments, exams or course work. As a professional regulatory body that is governed by provincial legislation, the College is required to comply with these changes.

### What is currently happening?

The College has worked closely with other teacher certification authorities across Canada to help streamline and possibly come to an agreement which would harmonize standards across the country. Currently, there are a number of provinces that do not meet British Columbia's standard on the number of credits and course content required to qualify for a certificate. The College believes, after extensive discussion, that many provinces are unwilling to raise their standard to that which was harmonized between Alberta and British Columbia last year in the Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement (TILMA).

Prior to the TILMA agreement, BC issued two main certificates: a standard (120 credits of post-secondary education including a teacher education program) and a professional (150 credits of post-secondary education including a degree and a teacher education program). With TILMA, the requirements for a certificate were completely overhauled in order to harmonize requirements and the College agreed to stop issuing the standard certificate and to revise the professional certificate to a minimum of 120 credits including a degree and a teacher education program. After these changes and others, Alberta Education, the BC Ministry of Education Independent Schools Branch, and the BC College of Teachers began issuing certificates based on this harmonized standard.

### What will happen under the AIT?

With the implementation of the AIT, all teachers certified in another province and transferring to British Columbia must be issued a certificate, despite the fact that they have not completed the minimum TILMA requirements for new applicants to the profession. In order to recognize the higher educational level achieved by teachers currently holding a professional certificate, the College is proposing to return to the two-certificate system. A basic certificate would be issued to those who do not meet the College requirements for a professional certificate. Requirements for this certificate will need to be developed and revisions may need to be made to the professional certificate requirements.

Because the College cannot offer a second certificate without the agreement of Alberta, the College has indicated to its counterparts in Alberta and the BC Independent Schools Branch that it will withdraw from the TILMA agreement in February, 2010 in order to comply with the requirements of the AIT. If the College and its TILMA partners can successfully renegotiate, a revised TILMA agreement, it will not be necessary to pull out of TILMA. As a last resort, withdrawal from the TILMA agreement would allow the College to accede to the requirements of the AIT and not lower the standards for a BC certificate. As it currently stands, the TILMA agreement is a barrier to the successful implementation of the AIT.

### What does this mean for employers?

School boards are still compelled by the School Act to hire teachers who hold BC College of Teachers certificates. While teachers may indeed hold certificates from other jurisdictions and be eligible for a BC certificate after the implementation of the AIT, they will still be required to hold a BC certificate in order to practice in a classroom in this province.

TQS will be kept abreast of any changes in rules or regulations regarding certificates and they will make their own determinations regarding salary categories, an area over which the College has no control. As always, the College will consult with partner groups on any changes that might be made to the certification of teachers in this province.

### Keeping Your Students Safe

The AIT allows the College to continue to make individual assessments with regards to fit and proper person guidelines, language proficiency, and currency of practice. The College retains the right to deny a certificate should it not be satisfied that fitness and conduct standards have been met, regardless of a teacher's certification status in another province or territory. Once a teacher has qualified for a College certificate under AIT, they will be considered a full member of the College and will be responsible for upholding the College's Standards for the Education, Competence and Professional Conduct of Educators in British Columbia.

### Next Steps

The College will keep you up-to-date with the progress made in its negotiations with Alberta and the BC Independent Schools Branch, as well as with any changes the College might make with regards to the AIT. We appreciate your input as leaders in education in this province.

