

THE ALBERTA TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

REPORT OF THE HEARING COMMITTEE
OF THE PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT COMMITTEE

IN THE MATTER OF CHARGES OF UNPROFESSIONAL
CONDUCT AGAINST HUGH N HARDING

The hearing committee of the Professional Conduct Committee of The Alberta Teachers' Association reports that charges of unprofessional conduct laid against Hugh N Harding of [Location Redacted] were duly investigated in accordance with the *Teaching Profession Act*. The hearing was held in Barnett House, 11010 142 Street NW, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada on Friday, October 18, 2002.

Professional Conduct Committee members present as the hearing committee

[Redacted] presented the case against the investigated member. The investigated member was not present and was not represented by counsel.

CONSTITUTION/JURISDICTION

There were no objections to the constitution of the committee or to its jurisdiction to hear the case.

PLEA

The following charges were read by the secretary to the hearing committee.

1. Hugh N Harding is charged with unprofessional conduct pursuant to the *Teaching Profession Act* in that he, while a member of The Alberta Teachers' Association, during the period August 2001 to February 2002, used school funds to purchase items which he kept for his personal use, thereby acting in a manner detrimental to the best interests of the public and the teaching profession.
2. Hugh N Harding is charged with unprofessional conduct pursuant to the *Teaching Profession Act* in that he, while a member of The Alberta Teachers' Association, during the period August 2001 to February 2002, used school funds to purchase items which he kept for his personal use, thereby engaging in activities which adversely affected the quality of his professional service.

The investigated member entered a plea of "guilty" to the charges in the form of a written submission of plea. (Exhibit 4)

WITNESSES

None.

EVIDENCE ADDUCED AND EXHIBITS FILED INDICATED THAT:

1. Hugh N Harding was a member of the Alberta Teachers' Association during the period September 1, 1995 to February 28, 2002 inclusive. (Exhibit 2)
2. During the 2001/2002 school year, H Harding was employed by [School Division Redacted] as a teacher and principal assigned to the [School Redacted] in [Location Redacted] Alberta until he resigned his employment effective February 8, 2002. (Exhibits 5, 11, and 12)
3. H Harding, in a signed statement, admitted that
 - a) he had a 32 inch Sony television set "hooked up in his home" that had been purchased with school funds;
 - b) he also had a DVD player and audio racks in his home that had been purchased with school funds;
 - c) he had a new telephone at his home which had been purchased with school funds. In place of this phone he installed an old phone from home at the school. The new telephone was later returned unused in its original package. (Exhibit 5)
4. H Harding provided [Name Redacted], superintendent, [School Division Redacted], with a hand-written note dated February 7, 2002 in which he verified that the 32 inch Sony flat screen television was located in his home, and that it had been hooked up in his home for personal use. (Exhibit 9)
5. In addition to the above mentioned items, H Harding had other school property in his home, which he subsequently returned. This included a laser printer, a colour bubble jet printer, a television/VCR combo, a digital camcorder and two computers. (Exhibit 6)
6. In a meeting held February 7, 2002, H Harding, after being questioned by [Name Redacted], admitted to him that he had placed in the school a used 28 inch Zenith television. H Harding initially took the position that the Zenith television was a newly purchased set. (Exhibit 7)

7. During the February 7, 2002 meeting, [Name Redacted] reminded H Harding that this was not the first occurrence of this nature. Specifically, a refrigerator purchased for the school had been placed and used in his home. [Name Redacted] stated that the school division had previously warned H Harding that this was not appropriate.
8. H Harding characterized his actions as being a form of "fiscal short-sightedness and woeful rationalization" in written correspondence to the school district. (Exhibit 10)
9. H Harding made restitution to the school district by returning school property in his possession as well as issuing a cheque in the amount of \$1,000. (Exhibit 6)

PENALTY

The hearing committee of the Professional Conduct Committee imposes the following penalty on Hugh Harding:

1. A letter of severe reprimand
2. Suspension of H Harding's membership in The Alberta Teachers' Association until June 30, 2003
3. A recommendation to the minister of learning to suspend the teaching certificate of H Harding until June 30, 2003

REASONS FOR PENALTY

1. Society expects that teachers will conduct themselves in a manner that maintains the honor and dignity of the profession.
2. Parents expect that teachers will be trustworthy. H Harding's actions violated that trust.
3. Principals are in a position of trust which includes the safeguarding of physical assets and finances. A breach of this trust adversely impacts how society and school authorities view principal teachers.
4. H Harding was not forthright with school authorities. His admission occurred only after being confronted with facts established by school authorities.
5. H Harding plead guilty to the charges. However, by characterizing his actions as "fiscal short-sightedness and woeful rationalization", he did not recognize the full gravity of his actions.

Report of the Hearing Committee of PCC
Harding, page 4

6. H Harding made restitution to the school district.

Dated at the City of Edmonton in the Province of Alberta, Friday, October 18, 2002.

HEARING COMMITTEE OF THE
PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT COMMITTEE
OF THE ALBERTA TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

