

ATA NEWS

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DEAL OR NO DEAL



CENTRAL TABLE 2020
BARGAINING
We are ATA

Teachers to vote on mediator's recommendations.
Details on page 5.

BILL 15 passes

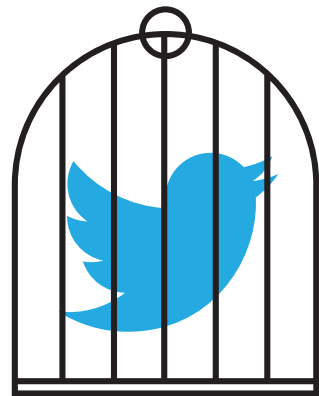
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Indigenous study finds challenges
Isolation and lack of support among the difficulties faced by Indigenous teachers.
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Live and in person
ATA readies for in-person Annual Representative Assembly.
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Pitfalls and Precautions
Code of Professional Conduct applies to social media presence.
See story on page 9.

Principals will be UCP's next targets



EDITORIAL

Jonathan Teghtmeyer
ATA News Editor-in-Chief

They're coming after principals next. With Bill 15 now passed in the legislature, we should expect that the next attack on the profession will relate to removing principals from the Alberta Teachers' Association.

One only needs to look at the experience in British Columbia and Ontario to see how this will likely play out.

In British Columbia, the year was 1987. The Social Credit government introduced two bills simultaneously. One bill established the B.C. College of Teachers, which would take over the professional functions of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF). The other bill removed principals and vice-principals from collective bargaining units and made them part of the management structures in schools.

Notably, the college was eventually

dismantled as it failed to gain the respect and confidence of teachers, and in 2011, it was replaced by a commissioner model – the model chosen by the UCP to replicate in Alberta.

In 1988, the specialist council established under the BCTF to support administrators split off and became the autonomous B.C. Principals and Vice-Principals Association. From this point forward, teachers and principals were no longer seen as colleagues and the relationship between them was forever altered.

Brett Cooper, assistant superintendent for human resources in Pembina Hills School Division and a former BC principal, described the effect of that in a recent article.

"In this environment of 'unions' and 'management,' it was very difficult to build true collaboration and collegiality – not impossible, but there were distinct barriers," writes Cooper in a recent *ATA News* article. "It does not create a culture of school improvement for students, and effecting real change in student learning becomes a significant challenge when 'two sides' are represented in the school."

In Ontario, the moves were part of the

so-called Common Sense Revolution, advanced by Progressive Conservative Premier Mike Harris in the 1990s. In 1996, the government established the Ontario College of Teachers, which removed the professional regulatory functions from the Ontario Teachers' Federation (an umbrella organization established by the five separate teacher unions in Ontario).

The next year, principals were removed. In 1997, the government established the Ontario Principals' Council, and principals were prohibited from belonging to a union and from collective bargaining.

Sam Hammond, former president of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, said these moves would "change the landscape of education in Ontario for decades."

"Ontario's publicly funded public education system has faced an uphill battle ever since, in search of common sense."

This issue is very much alive in the mind of the premier here and now in Alberta.

When asked during the election campaign of 2019, the premier explicitly said he would not split the ATA. He

said they tried it in B.C. and it didn't work. Knowing full well that it didn't work in B.C., he chose that option for regulating the teaching profession anyway. But when it came to removing principals, Kenney said "That is certainly something we'd be open to."

"As far as I'm concerned, principals are management, and it seems to me they have responsibility to manage the teachers and to manage human resources in their schools," he said. "So, to be part of the same union of the people they are managing does seem to be a conflict of interest."

Kenney figured himself to be an expert on the topic.

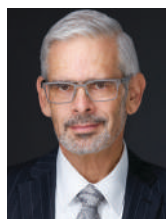
"My dad was a principal, and so I think I know something about the importance of that role and I am concerned there is a conflict in that work," he said.

What Kenney clearly is not an expert in is the concepts of collegiality and collaboration.

We must not allow this next step to happen. To do that we must be vigilant, and we must get ready for this challenge, now. ■

I welcome your comments. Contact me at jonathan.teghtmeyer@ata.ab.ca.

Passing of Bill 15 raises many questions



Q & A

Dennis Theobald
ATA Executive Secretary

Question: Bill 15, enabling the government to take over the Alberta Teachers' Association's regulatory responsibilities for professional discipline and competence, has now passed. What now?

Answer: As I am writing this column, Bill 15 has just completed third reading in the legislature. Given the broader political uncertainty facing this government, there is an outside possibility that proclamation of the legislation might be delayed, possibly indefinitely. While admittedly remote, this possibility is not unprecedented. Bill 85, passed just last fall, promised helpful and substantive improvements to current professional discipline processes, but was superseded by Bill 15. Perhaps another change of policy direction is not out of the question.

But hoping that Bill 15 provisions will not proceed to implementation is a bit like whistling past the graveyard, so the Association is already considering the bill's implications for our operations and the culture of the profession. Much, of course, will depend upon the

regulations adopted by government to facilitate the bill's implementation. The Association was not meaningfully consulted on the bill's content, and I'm not holding my breath that we will have much input into potential regulations.

A critical problem, then, will be the transition to the new order. At the risk of providing government with information that it will cynically misrepresent and weaponize, we currently have more than 200 cases that are active with more than 150 currently being investigated. Some of these cases, due to legal complications, competing criminal processes and lack of capacity of respondents, have been ongoing for a number of years and will not be easily or quickly resolved.

The Association, consistent with its commitment to upholding the public interest and to ensure the integrity of the professional disciplinary process, will want to facilitate as smooth a transition as possible. I anticipate that government will expect us to complete a number of the investigations and hearings that are currently underway, although that will be challenging given that the minister has maliciously misrepresented and denigrated our efforts, saying "Simply put, parents can't trust the Alberta Teachers Association [*sic*] to act in the best interest of students." (email to UCP members, March 31, 2022)

But this is a temporary problem that

will, in fairly short order, be resolved, one way or another. More profoundly, teachers will have to consider the Association's future and the culture of the profession in Alberta. The government's stripping from teachers their capacity for self-regulation forces us to consider some fundamental

“ Teachers will have to consider the Association's future and the culture of the profession in Alberta. ”

questions about the Association's role in a post-Bill 15 province, including,

- What will be the Association's relationship with the commissioner and functionaries responsible for implementing the new professional conduct and practice review processes?
- Will the Association now actively represent teachers who are caught up in the government's process, and what are the policy and

financial implications of providing representation?

- What role and what attendant services might the Association undertake to resolve conflict between members, should the government decide that it does not wish to deal with complaints made under sections of the Code of Professional Conduct relating to colleagues and the profession?
- How will resources be allocated to remaining professional functions (apart from discipline), advocacy and "core union" work?
- In what ways will the Association embrace its new, more "union forward" identity, and how will it co-ordinate its efforts with those of other public and private sector unions and labour organizations?
- How will the Association respond to other threats, including potentially the removal of school administrators from membership or the elimination of the Board of Reference and teacher tenure?

These are profound questions that we ought not to attempt to answer in haste. How teachers choose to respond will have profound strategic and existential implications for the Association and the culture of education in Alberta. ■

Questions for consideration in this column are welcome. Please address them to Dennis Theobald at dennis.theobald@ata.ab.ca.



Datafication puts education at risk



VIEWPOINTS

Phil McRae
ATA Associate Co-ordinator, Research

In April 2022, the government of Alberta announced that, in response to the pandemic “learning loss,” school authorities across the province would be required to administer standardized literacy and numeracy tests to children in grades 1 to 3, starting in September 2022. Two days before proclaiming this edict, the government also launched a two-hour standardized digital test for 15 year olds in mathematics, science and reading, along with an additional financial literacy assessment on behalf of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).

Given the UCP education platform, the Alberta Teachers’ Association anticipated this move and in early 2022 launched a research project (led by Dr. Richelle Marynowski of the University of Lethbridge) to gauge the Alberta landscape of standardized (and digital) diagnostic assessment products being used across school authorities.

This research project will articulate what instruments are primarily being used in classrooms, and how teachers and school leaders perceive their actual value and impact on diagnosing student learning challenges and/or enhancing instruction. This research will also gauge the extent to which these tests add to existing work intensification and bureaucratic burdens for Alberta’s teaching profession.

The dramatic increase in standardized testing across Alberta is part of a very strategic march toward a narrowing of K–6 curriculum to privilege the math and reading domains. It is also part of the establishment of a new digital testing infrastructure that can generate more standardized student learning data for those farthest away from our classrooms and schools.

This overreliance on standardized digital testing, and the narrowing of learning outcomes to curricular domains that can be easily measured (math and reading), has been shown globally to be both regressive to preparing young people for a world

of complex change, and corrosive to student engagement.

By emphasizing a narrow range of measurable aspects of education, these standardized tests and diagnostic assessments take attention away from the less measurable (or immeasurable) educational objectives like physical, moral, civic and artistic development, thereby dangerously narrowing our collective imagination regarding what education is and ought to be about for Albertans.

“... standardized tests and diagnostic assessments take attention away from the less measurable educational objectives ...”

The concern for Alberta

The narrowing (or reductionist approach) should be of particular concern in Alberta, with a new K–6 curriculum on the horizon, and where we need to reintroduce a focus on wellness and well-being in our schools following the global pandemic.

Alberta’s education minister has stated that “assessing students in their early years provides essential information... to government about student learning issues, gaps and needs so students who may be at risk get the help they need.” The reality, however, is that teachers and school leaders already know which students are at risk in their schools. They know in the first few hours and days with their students. What our professionals are facing is moral distress because they do not have the appropriate

resources and supports to meet their students’ needs.

As a profession, we should be aware that the notion of “learning loss” will be used in pandemic recovery as rationale for increasing standardized testing. It will also be used as a bludgeon to signal a lack of trust in the professionalism of teachers. The UCP’s education platform (pre-pandemic 2019) states an intention to ramp up digital standardized testing for all children, at each and every grade level, as the means to hold “schools and teachers more accountable for student performance.”

Accountability, or the ability to count, has become the driving philosophy, versus an emphasis on responsibility, whereby schools and teachers have the ability to respond with appropriate resources and supports necessary for their students and school community. We need more responsibility to support our students and school communities versus narrow ideas of accountability and performativity through datafication.

The datafication of learning

As shared on the Association’s wetheeducators.com website, “datafication” is an accelerating technological trend that is turning many aspects of our lives into computerized data and transforming organizations into data-driven enterprises by converting this information into new forms of value. Social media, for example, datafies our friendships to market products and services to us and surveillance services to agencies, which in turn changes our behaviour.

Datafication narrows teachers’ professional autonomy to ensure the creation of “good data” for the government of Alberta based on these testing regimes. However, children and teachers in Alberta are not merely data. Data are abstract elements and, indeed, far too often become politicized (e.g., learning loss, Fraser Institute school rankings).

We should draw on the professional wisdom of the late Joe Bower of Red Deer, who in 2015 stated in response to the growing datafication of learning: “Want to collect data on how children are learning? Know them. Watch them. Listen to them. Talk with them. Sit with them. Be with them.” ■

YOUR VIEWS

Teachers and parents comment on professional conduct, discipline and Bill 15

INSTAGRAM

jonimallabone

The current education minister of Alberta is striving to undermine public education. We need to vote this government out before they do any more damage!

kylecarnahan77

A lot of us parents reject your whole agenda. We are the parents, not you. Just teach how to think, don’t present your opinions as fact. This teaching to think will supplement what my kids are already learning at home from their parents.

FACEBOOK

Nancy Stuewe

The best way to protect students is to protect the teachers who nurture them.

TWITTER

Shane Colpitts @Colpittsh

Do you see yet @AdrianaLaGrange? We are not afraid of you for us. We fear what you will do to education and generations of learners. We are in this profession because we care. Your actions have now given us resolve. They give us fury and we will not be silent!

Kevin McBeath @mbeathke

@Alberta_UCP is dismantling our professional teaching association. @jkenney is purposefully and systematically attempting to remove @albertateachers ability to impact public education and consolidate power in the hands of @AdrianaLaGrange.

Jen Walton @alohateach

Why is an education minister with a RESOUNDING non-confidence vote still in a position to make decisions that will forever impact public education? Bill 15 and your new curriculum plan show a disgraceful misuse of power.

FOR THE RECORD

“

While the minister attempts to distract the public from her mishandling of the education file ... we will continue to focus on the things that matter most — students and schools.

”

– ATA president Jason Schilling reacting to the passing of Bill 15.



Indigenous study finds common challenges

Isolation and lack of support among the difficulties faced by Indigenous teachers in Alberta

Cory Hare
ATA News Managing Editor

While Indigenous teachers and leaders in Alberta share a love for teaching, they also report experiencing several common challenges, such as feeling pressure to “toe the line,” getting stuck in limiting, predefined roles and feeling a lack of support from leaders.

These are the findings of a new study by the Alberta Teachers' Association and University of Alberta researcher Dr. Dwayne Donald. As outlined in a report released May 10, the study found that the following common experiences are shared by many Indigenous teachers and leaders who participated in the study:

- A love for teaching
- Feeling pressure to “toe the line,” (i.e., not be too vocal or stand out too much as an Indigenous person)
- Getting stuck in predefined roles
- Experiencing vicarious trauma
- Feeling isolated, vulnerable and unsupported by leaders
- Facing challenges with respect to new career opportunities, recruitment and retention

The study involved an online survey of 96 Indigenous teachers, school leaders and central office leaders followed by focus groups involving a total of 13 Indigenous participants.

Toeing the line

Many focus group participants expressed frustration with systemic structures and practices that position Indigenous education initiatives as second-rate in comparison to other educational concerns. Participants reported that they regularly feel marginalized, disregarded and dismissed by supervisors and colleagues in the work that they do. They feel the need to “toe the line,” or conform to problematic expectations in order to maintain their positions and continue their work.

“I’ve always felt — since I have been in the education field, no matter where I am at — I’ve always had to accommodate. I’ve always had to toe the line. I had to learn how to play the game. I had to learn when to put my mask on,” said one participant. “It’s so subtle sometimes; it’s not overt. But it’s these little pins and needles that get thrown at you. I’ve always felt that I’m not worthy enough because I am who I am, because of my skin colour ... because I am visibly Aboriginal. I’ve always felt that it’s a barrier, a wall.”

Broader partnership

This ATA research activity was part of a broader partnership with the College of Alberta School Superintendents that further gathered superintendents’ perspectives and expanded the perspectives beyond the Association’s members, who are all Alberta certificated teachers, school leaders and central office staff.

Getting stuck in roles

Participants described being “pigeonholed” by being assigned “all the Indigenous stuff” once their identity was known. The participants stated that this experience seems to be connected to the desire of school or division leaders to have Indigenous matters covered so that they can check boxes and give the impression that Indigenous programming needs are being effectively met. Some participants expressed the view that their own career opportunities are being negatively affected by such systemic practices.

Vicarious trauma

Vicarious trauma refers to the harmful effects of consistent exposure to the traumatic experiences of others. In the context of this research initiative, some focus group participants reported that they suffer the effects of vicarious trauma when witnessing systemic racism experienced by Indigenous students, their parents and even their Indigenous colleagues.

Feeling isolated, vulnerable and unsupported by leaders

The focus group participants reported that they sometimes feel as though their educational roles place them at the centre of contentious Indigenous-Canadian relations that still exist in many Alberta communities. Such positioning can sometimes result in feelings of isolation, marginalization and vulnerability when teachers don’t feel supported by their leaders.

“It seems like I am always being alienated, isolated from the rest of the teachers because I am the Cree teacher ... I would really like those things to change. To be recognized as a teacher is what I really need,” reported one focus group participant.

Career opportunities, recruitment and retention

Focus group participants stated that they were not aware of any formal efforts to recruit or retain Indigenous teachers to join their school divisions. They seemed to share the view that their own opportunities to serve in Indigenous education leadership roles came mostly as a result of the support of an individual colleague who advocated on their behalf rather than any systemwide commitment to retain and promote Indigenous educators.

One participant outlined how important it is for students to see Indigenous leaders who are doing well in the school system.

“They need to see the people that come from their community, having gone through the very same issues in their community, having had the very same background, leading in their schools and being successful in their lives,” the participant said. “Yet our division has no Indigenous leaders. The number of Indigenous teachers in our division is very small.”

Moving forward

The report states that Alberta’s public education system needs to do more than simply increase the number of Indigenous staff within classrooms and school communities. Instead, more comprehensive system change is needed. The report identifies the following three elements as key to moving forward effectively:

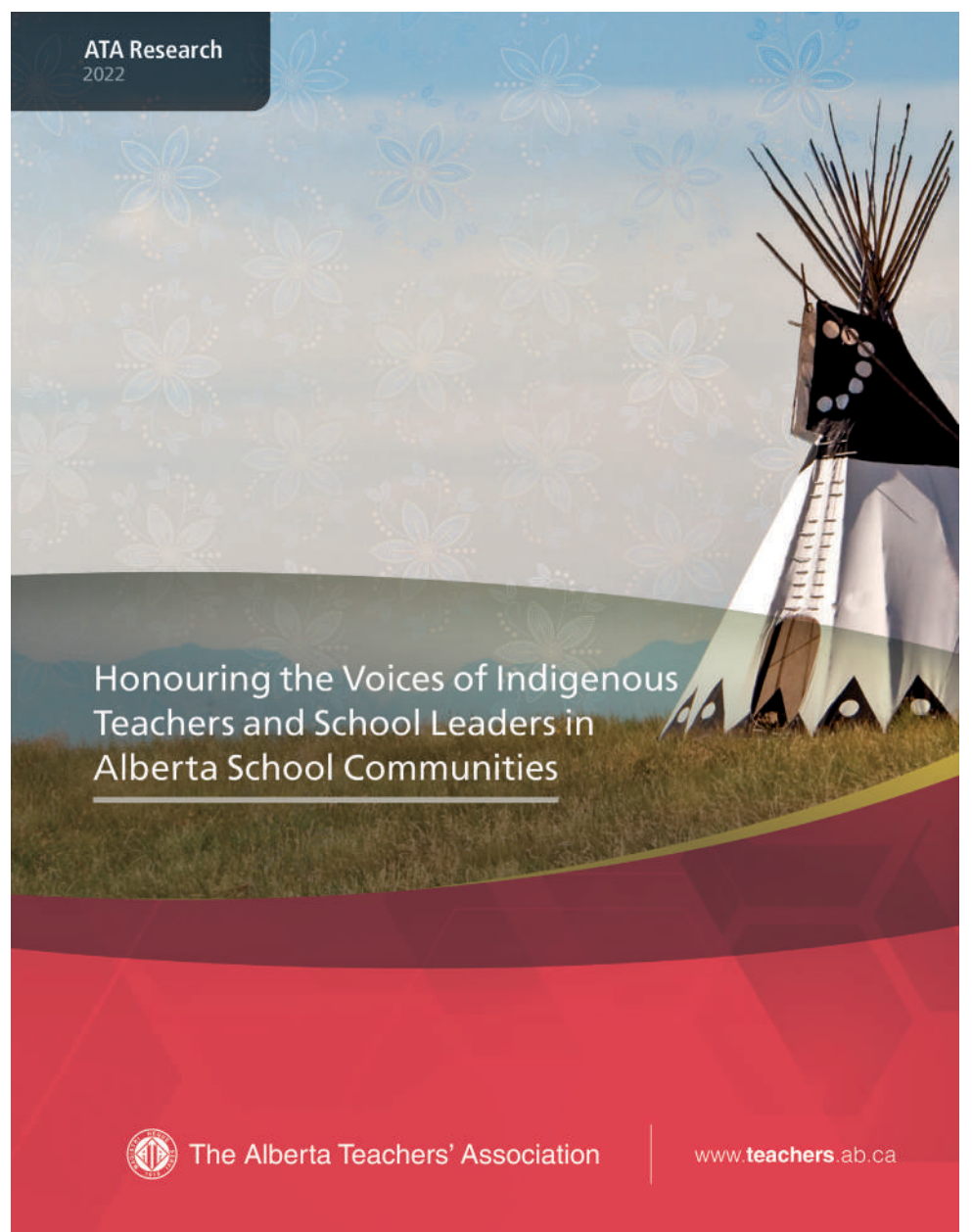
1. A shared vision that unifies all involved

2. Creating sustainable cultural changes in the daily workings of schools
3. Mentorship program that provides a network of support for Indigenous educators

“There will be no cultural change without system change,” Donald said.

While some non-Indigenous people may feel that reconciliation has already taken place, since the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was released in 2015, the experiences of Indigenous people suggest that much more work remains to be done to ensure that Indigenous teachers, school leaders and central office leaders feel wholeheartedly valued and respected physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

The report states, “We have a collective responsibility to do better within Alberta’s public education system as part of our individual and collective efforts to advance reconciliation.” ■



FIND THE REPORT

The *Report on Honouring the Voices of Indigenous Teachers, School Leaders and Central Office Leaders in Alberta School Communities, 2022* is available at www.teachers.ab.ca > My ATA > Professional Development > Indigenous Education and Walking Together > Research.



STORIES AND PHOTOS WANTED

If something newsworthy is going on in your school, district or local, please let us know. We will also consider articles, photos and cartoons. Please email tips and submissions to managing editor Cory Hare: cory.hare@ata.ab.ca.

Teachers to vote on contract terms



Information meetings scheduled for teachers to learn about terms recommended by mediator

ATA News Staff

Teachers will have an opportunity to learn about and vote on new collective agreement terms that would apply to every bargaining unit in the province.

Following informal mediation between the Central Table Bargaining Committee (CTBC) and the Teachers' Employer Bargaining Association (TEBA), a mediator has issued recommended terms of settlement for central table bargaining.

As a result, the ATA is hosting a series of in-person and online member information meetings (MIMs) to provide the details of the recommendation, respond to questions and allow teachers to discuss. The full schedule of MIMs is below.

Following these meetings, at the beginning of June, teachers will vote on whether to accept or reject the mediator's proposal.

"The CTBC bargains for teachers, and teachers have the final say," said ATA president Jason Schilling. "I know teachers have been waiting a long time for this news, and it's now time for them to familiarize themselves with the recommendations, what the recommendations will mean for them and decide how to vote."

For Peter MacKay, chair of the Central Table Bargaining Committee and district representative for North West, the recommendation comes following an intense round of central table bargaining.

"CTBC fought hard for the things that matter to teachers, such as salary, class size and composition, and instructional

and assignable time," he said. "Your team never abandoned the positions that mattered to you, and brought into mediation the entire initial proposal, with nothing dropped. However, the other side had its own convictions, and as we anticipated, the mediator pressed for compromises."

"Teachers have the final say on whether to accept the terms of settlement, and we will now be taking the time to speak to and hear from our members."

Attend a meeting

The meetings are scheduled by region, and although teachers can attend any session they wish, MacKay says attending the meetings that have been arranged for their particular region will give them the best access to information pertaining to their bargaining unit.

"There will be some items that are very specific to particular bargaining units," he said. "Attending the meeting that includes your district will give you the best understanding of what the recommendations mean for you."

MacKay also noted that each bargaining unit has one in-person and one virtual session, but they are not necessarily on the same day. He encourages teachers to take note of whether the session they plan to attend is in-person or virtual.

Teachers can review the details of the mediator's recommendations, and see the full MIM schedule with corresponding documents in the Member's Only section of the ATA website.

Teachers are also encouraged to reach out to their Teacher Welfare Committee (TWC) member if they have questions. ■

MEMBER INFORMATION MEETINGS / IN-PERSON SESSIONS

Lethbridge – May 10
Sandman Signature
(Lethbridge Lodge)
320 Scenic Drive South,
Lethbridge
19:00–21:00

Bargaining units
CS FrancoSud
Holy Spirit Catholic
Horizon
Lethbridge
Livingstone Range
Palliser
Westwind

Medicine Hat – May 11
Medicine Hat Exhibition
& Stampede
Grand Stand Banquet
Room
2055 21 Avenue SE,
Medicine Hat
18:00–20:00

Bargaining units
CS FrancoSud
Grasslands
Medicine Hat Catholic
Medicine Hat Public
Prairie Land
Prairie Rose

Red Deer – May 18
Westerner Park,
Harvest Centre,
Heartland Room
4847A 19 Street,
Red Deer
19:00–21:00

Bargaining units
Chinook's Edge
Clearview
Red Deer Catholic
Red Deer Public
Wetaskiwin
Wild Rose
Wolf Creek

Calgary – May 19
Telus Convention Centre,
Exhibition Hall E
120 9 Avenue SE, Calgary
17:00–19:00

Bargaining units
Calgary Catholic
Calgary Public
Canadian Rockies
Chinook's Edge
Christ the Redeemer
CS FrancoSud
Foothills
Golden Hills
Livingstone Range
Palliser
Rocky View

Fort McMurray – May 24
MacDonald Island Park,
Miskanaw North Ballroom
1 CA Knight Way,
Fort McMurray
17:30–19:30

Bargaining units
CS Centre-Nord
Fort McMurray Catholic
Fort McMurray Public
Fort Vermilion
Northland

Grande Prairie – May 25
Pomeroy Hotel
& Conference Centre
11633 100 Street,
Grande Prairie
19:00–21:00

Bargaining units
CS Nord-Ouest
Fort Vermilion
Grande Prairie Catholic
Grande Prairie Public
High Prairie
Holy Family
Northland
Peace River
Peace Wapiti

Edmonton – May 26
Hilton Doubletree,
Grand Ballroom
16615 109 Avenue NW,
Edmonton
19:00–21:00

Bargaining units
Aspen View
Battle River
Black Gold
Buffalo Trail
CS Centre-Est
CS Centre-Nord
East Central Catholic
Edmonton Catholic
Edmonton Public
Elk Island Catholic
Elk Island Public
Evergreen Catholic
Grande Yellowhead
Greater St Albert Catholic
Lakeland Catholic
Living Waters Catholic
Northern Gateway
Northern Lights
Parkland
Pembina Hills
St. Albert Public
St. Paul
St. Thomas Aquinas
Sturgeon
Wetaskiwin

ZOOM SESSIONS

Central and North 1 – May 12
18:00–20:00

Bargaining units
All francophone teachers
Aspen View
Battle River
Buffalo Trail
Chinook's Edge
Clearview
East Central Catholic
Fort Vermilion
High Prairie
Holy Family
Lakeland Catholic
Northern Lights
Northland
Peace River
Red Deer Catholic
Red Deer Public
St. Paul
Wild Rose
Wolf Creek

South East and West – May 17
18:00–20:00

Bargaining units
Golden Hills
Grasslands
Holy Spirit Catholic
Horizon
Lethbridge
Livingstone Range
Medicine Hat Public
Medicine Hat Catholic
Prairie Land
Prairie Rose
Palliser
Westwind

All francophone – June 1
18:00–20:00

Bargaining units
CS Centre-Est
CS Centre-Nord
CS Nord-Ouest
CS FrancoSud

Central and North 2 – May 30
18:00–20:00

Bargaining units
Aspen View
Battle River
Black Gold
Buffalo Trail
East Central Catholic
Evergreen Catholic
Grande Prairie Catholic
Grande Prairie Public
Grande Yellowhead
Lakeland Catholic
Living Waters Catholic
Northern Lights
Northern Gateway
Parkland
Peace Wapiti
Pembina Hills
St. Paul
St. Thomas Aquinas
Wetaskiwin

Edmonton City, Fort McMurray & Edmonton District – May 31
(Central North and Central East)

18:00–20:00
Bargaining units
Edmonton Catholic
Edmonton Public
Elk Island Catholic
Elk Island Public
Fort McMurray Catholic
Fort McMurray Public
Greater St. Albert Catholic
St. Albert Public
Sturgeon

Calgary City & Calgary District – June 2
18:00–20:00

Bargaining units
Calgary Catholic
Calgary Public
Canadian Rockies
Christ the Redeemer
Foothills
Rocky View



Stars of the ATA LOCAL SHOWCASE

THE ATA WANTS TO HIGHLIGHT YOUR ENDEAVOURS

Think of this noncompetitive program as a brag board of sorts. You send us a brief description of your project, including photos and videos, and we will feature your work in a showcase at Summer Conference, on social media, as well as at other ATA events throughout the year.



The Alberta Teachers' Association

HOW TO SUBMIT

ONLINE FOR MORE DETAILS
www.teachers.ab.ca

SUBMISSION DEADLINE
June 1st





COMM-295-4-EXT 2022 03



Adam


Rebecca

PLAYSAFE: Don't Let It Happen to You

The War Amps “kids-to-kids” safety video, featuring stories from young amputees who have lost limbs in accidents, delivers the hard-hitting but positive message: “Spot the danger *before* you play!”

Visit waramps.ca/playsafe for the video and safety resources.

The War Amps 



The ATA Educational Trust

Morgex/Johnson Insurance Centennial Fund for Teacher Development (\$600)


Through this grant program, the Trust encourages teachers to advance their knowledge and teaching skills by attending a non-ATA conference, a workshop, a seminar, an institute or a symposium. Grants are paid after the recipient has attended the professional development event, submitted proof of payment and a completed claim form.

Application deadline: September 30, 2022

ATA Specialist Council Conference Grants (\$500)


Each year, the Trust awards a number of grants to help defray the costs associated with attending an ATA specialist council conference. Eligible expenses include registration, accommodation, fuel and food. Only expenses not covered by other grants will be considered for compensation.

Application deadline: September 30, 2022




www.teachers.ab.ca > My ATA > Programs and Services > Grants, Awards and Scholarships > The ATA Educational Trust

AR-ETF 30a 2022-04



OVERCROWDED CLASSROOMS

Public Education is suffering. Funding cuts, overcrowded classrooms, and a flawed curriculum are damaging. NOW is the time for parents, students, teachers and all Albertans to COME TOGETHER. Oppose a Government that gives special funding to privileged private schools at the expense of the rest of us. Education should be safe from political agendas. And schools are a place where kids can thrive and teachers are supported. Come together and stand for Public Education, say 'ENOUGH IS ENOUGH'



The Alberta Teachers' Association
standforeducation.ca

Bill 15 changes ATA identity

Cory Hare
ATA News Managing Editor

Bill 15 is a mistake and its implementation will significantly alter Alberta's public education system and the ATA's identity.

That was the statement issued by Alberta Teachers' Association president Jason Schilling after the government passed Bill 15 on May 4.



Jason Schilling, ATA president

"I echo the words of great Albertans like Myer Horowitz and David King when I say that this will be profoundly damaging to one of the world's best education systems," Schilling said. "Albertans should be very concerned that this bill was passed based on unfounded allegations propelled by lies and misinformation."

The legislation will remove teacher discipline from the ATA and place it in the hands of the Alberta Teaching Profession Commission, which the government is creating to act as an arm's-length entity that oversees conduct and competency complaints for all teachers and teacher leaders in the province. The government will be appointing a commissioner, and the commission will officially take effect in January 2023.

"Alberta's teachers are some of the best and most dedicated in the country,"



Adriana LaGrange, education minister

LaGrange stated via Twitter. "This legislation make the process more timely, transparent, free from bias and elevates the status of the teaching profession to best meet the needs of our children."

Schilling said the change fundamentally changes the identity and culture of the Alberta Teachers' Association and was done without any meaningful consultation. He added that the ATA will continue to act with integrity by upholding professional standards during the transition period that ensues until the commission is operational.

"Despite the efforts of the minister to undermine public confidence, we will continue to do our important work to protect the public interest," he said.

"We are worried, though, that the minister believes she can establish a commissioner's office ready to take over this work in just seven months. She has severely miscalculated the complexity of this critical work."

He described Bill 15 as an effort to punish the Association and teachers for "daring to stand up to the government's bad decisions" on issues like curriculum, funding, deteriorating classroom conditions and privatization, "and to coerce us into complying with their agenda."

"But we will not waver," he said. "We will continue today and into the future to stand up for students, for teachers and for public education." ■



CTF/FCE CORNER

CTF addresses tax credit delay

ATA News Staff

The Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF/FCE) is urging the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) and Government of Canada to rectify a problem that is preventing many teachers' tax returns from being processed.

Following a meeting in late April with the CRA and the Office of the Minister of National Revenue, the CTF/FCE learned that the CRA is delaying processing all tax returns with claims for the Eligible Education School Supply Tax Credit until Bill C-8 achieves royal assent.

The CBC reported that the CRA was holding back the tax returns of approximately 50,000 teachers. Subsequently, on May 3, the CBC reported that the CRA is now offering to release teachers' tax refunds that are stuck in limbo, but only for teachers who are "experiencing extreme financial hardship."

According to the CBC report, the CRA will now assess teachers' tax

returns and issue refunds without their claim for the school supply credit, then reassess the returns and issue the credit once Bill C-8 becomes law.

CTF/FCE says there remain questions for the CRA surrounding the delay.

"It is incredibly disappointing and quite frankly unacceptable how teachers and education workers have been left in limbo," said CTF/FCE president Sam Hammond. "For more than two years they have worked tirelessly under extreme circumstances to keep public education afloat. They are exhausted, burnt out and frustrated, and this tax credit error only adds insult to injury. They deserve far better than this."

As the CTF/FCE continues to receive inquiries from individual teachers and education workers, each detailing how this situation has caused stress and confusion, the CTF/FCE has created a dedicated email where questions can be sent.

Please send your queries to vox@ctf-fce.ca to receive a detailed explanation of what is occurring with the tax credit and the processing of tax assessments. ■

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Highlights from the legislature

Government and opposition debate education issues

Kim Clement
ATA News Staff

The spring session of the 30th legislature began in February. Here is a summary of the education-related discussions that took place from April 25 to 28.

K-6 draft curriculum

April 25—**Sarah Hoffman** (NDP—Edmonton-Glenora) asked Education Minister Adriana LaGrange if she would delay implementation of the curriculum until a reasonable number of public, Catholic and francophone boards are willing to pilot it. LaGrange answered that she's already hearing from school authorities starting the process of ensuring that they have professional development and the resources available for their teachers. LaGrange referenced Fort Vermilion's piloting of the curriculum. Hoffman noted that the minister had to drive eight hours to find one school division willing to pilot her "dumpster fire of a curriculum."

Tracy Allard (UCP—Grande Prairie) asked LaGrange to outline the implementation plan to support the new curriculum, and how it will be resourced appropriately when implemented across Alberta in the fall. LaGrange stated there will be a staged approach to implementing the new

curriculum. Beginning in September 2022, English language arts and mathematics will be implemented for students in kindergarten to Grade 3 as well as physical education and wellness for K-6 students. Implementation of the new subjects by common grade groupings such as K-3 and 4-6 will ensure successful implementation, and \$59 million in this upcoming year has been allocated to help prepare teachers, parents and students for the new curriculum.

Private school financial data reporting

April 26—**Rachel Notley** (NDP—Edmonton-Strathcona) asked Education Minister Adriana LaGrange why the government is changing reporting requirements for private schools, noting that they do receive public funding. LaGrange answered that private independent schools do have to report on their audited financial statements and only receive 70 per cent of the per student grants that are available to public jurisdictions. She noted that government would be reducing the collection of financial data, not eliminating. LaGrange concluded by stating that independent schools get 70 per cent funding for operational uses and no capital funding whatsoever. "They save dollars for Alberta taxpayers."

Private school financial data reporting and education funding

April 26—**Sarah Hoffman** (NDP—Edmonton-Glenora) asked Education Minister Adriana LaGrange why the government is decreasing the requirements for financial reporting of private schools while public education is being underfunded. LaGrange said that there are 160 more teachers, \$700 million in the overall education budget, plus \$45 million to address learning loss disruption. She added that she has "school authorities constantly thanking me for the additional dollars, the additional supports, the fact that we have engaged."

Education policies and funding

April 26—**Sarah Hoffman** (NDP—Edmonton-Glenora) asked Education Minister Adriana LaGrange why the government is driving up school fees with their cuts to school districts. In Sherwood Park, Elk Island Schools announced a 20 per cent increase to transportation fees for students. Hoffman continued by asking why the government is forcing struggling parents to pay more and get less support. LaGrange answered that government added an additional \$700 million over three years: \$191 million for the curriculum implementation, \$110 million to address mental health and



wellness, and \$45 million for dealing with learning loss. She concluded by stating that school boards have gone from \$363 million in operating reserves to \$464 million as of August 2021.

Teacher disciplinary process and Bill 15

April 28—**Matt Jones** (UCP—Calgary-South East) asked Health Minister Jason Copping to explain the factors behind the government's decision to remove the disciplinary function from the ATA. Copping said that the changes will make the education system safer for students, their families, and for teachers and remove the conflict of interest. He continued by stating that "the significant changes here are that rather than three different bodies overseeing discipline, the commissioner will oversee the process regardless of whether the teacher or teacher leader is an ATA member. The registrar will now be responsible for the intake of all complaints, and the commissioner will investigate them." ■

Former president and top executive to receive ATA honours

ATA News Staff

A former president and a former executive secretary are in line to receive honorary ATA memberships in recognition of their meritorious service.

Mark Ramsankar, ATA president from 2013 to 2017, and Gordon Thomas, executive secretary from 2003 to 2018, will receive the awards at this year's Annual Representative Assembly, which is scheduled to take place in Calgary over the May long weekend.

Mark Ramsankar

Ramsankar began his teaching career in 1987 with Edmonton Public Schools and went on to teach every grade from one to 12.

Ramsankar was president of the Edmonton Public Teachers Local No. 37 for four years. He was elected vice-president of Provincial Executive Council in 2009 and was elected ATA president four years later.

During his tenure as ATA president, Ramsankar was a staunch advocate for the teaching profession and specifically for the issues of truth and reconciliation, education funding and teacher retention. After then Education Minister Jeff Johnson released his *Task Force on Teacher Excellence*, which contained a number of recommendations that the ATA viewed as an attack on the profession, Ramsankar played a vital role in developing the Association's counter strategy.

Ramsankar also played a key role with the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF), serving as vice-president and president.

Throughout his time as president, Ramsankar was known for his propensity for taking a quick selfie photo with anyone who was willing, fellow teacher or otherwise.

Gordon Thomas

Shortly after earning his B.Ed. in 1977, Thomas landed a position teaching social studies and drama at



Mark Ramsankar, former president



Gordon Thomas, former executive secretary

the new Sturgeon Composite High School in Namao (just north of Edmonton). Five years later, Thomas left the classroom to join the University of Alberta's department of secondary education as a sessional instructor and academic supervisor. During this time, he completed a master's degree and a PhD and thought he was headed for academia or a central office job, but instead joined the ATA in 1984 as an executive staff officer in the Professional Development program area.

During his time at the ATA, Thomas was responsible

for many significant contributions in the areas of curriculum, student evaluation, teacher education and certification, and professional development field service. He's credited as being the key architect of the Association's Teacher Growth, Supervision, Evaluation policy, which is still in use today.

In 2007 Thomas worked behind the scenes to help negotiate an agreement that saw the government assume responsibility for teachers' \$2.1 billion unfunded pension plan liability. ■

Two academics to receive ATA's Public Education Award

ATA News Staff

The Alberta Teachers' Association will grant its Public Education Award to two high-profile academics this year.

This award is offered occasionally to an individual or a group that has given outstanding support to public education in Alberta other than through teaching. This year the honour will be awarded posthumously to Darren Lund, a former high school teacher, professor and human rights activist as well as Carla Peck, a professor of social studies education and outspoken champion of sound curriculum and social justice.

Darren Lund

Lund combined a passion for teaching and research with a commitment to social justice. He sought to promote equity through education research, curricula and practice and applied this ethic to every project he undertook and course he taught. After graduating from the University of Calgary in 1983 with a B.Ed., Lund spent 16 years as a high school teacher in public schools before moving into academia.

His ground-breaking research on student and teacher activism emerged from his founding (along with some enthusiastic high school students) of Students and Teachers Opposing Prejudice (STOP), a pioneering program that lasted for more than two decades. Lund's initiative awarded him the inaugural Alberta Human Rights Award in 1987. Lund and STOP also forged a path for youth activism toward equality, and among its accomplishments was creating the first-ever gay-straight alliance in Alberta.

Among numerous achievements in a vibrant academic career, Lund's work in community-engaged learning and interdisciplinary research earned him the inaugural 2021 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Award from the University of Calgary's Werklund School of Education. He also established the innovative and award-winning Service-Learning Program for Diversity, collaborating with 12 Calgary agencies to improve the quality of life and learning outcomes for children and youth of diverse backgrounds.



Darren Lund, posthumous recipient



Carla Peck, Public Education Award recipient

Lund died on Nov. 10, 2021 after a battle with cancer. He is remembered for his compassion, humility, inspiration to others and tireless advocacy.

Carla Peck

Peck's research focuses on teachers' and students' understanding of democratic concepts. She also studies the relationship between student ethnicity and their understanding of history. Before starting her career in academia, Peck was an elementary school teacher in New Brunswick. Passionate about social justice education, she has always sought to engage students of all ages in discussions about how to make the world a more just and equitable place for everyone.

Peck is involved in curriculum development in Alberta and advocates for quality social studies and

history education locally and globally. As part of that advocacy, she has led workshops for K-12 teachers nationally and internationally in these subjects and served as a consultant on numerous boards and advisory groups.

She is the director of *Thinking Historically for Canada's Future*, a national SSHRC-funded Partnership Grant on K-12 history education. She has also authored and co-authored numerous journal articles and books on the teaching of history, including *Teaching and Learning Difficult Histories in International Contexts: A Critical Sociocultural Approach* and *Contemplating Historical Consciousness: Notes from the Field*.

The Public Education awards will be handed out at the Annual Representative Assembly that is scheduled to take place in Calgary over the May long weekend. ■



FILE

The ATA's Annual Representative Assembly will take place in-person in Calgary over the May long weekend. The event has taken place virtually for the past two years.

ARA returns as in-person event

105th Annual Representative Assembly to take place in downtown Calgary

Kim Clement
ATA News Staff

For the first time since 2019, the ATA's Annual Representative Assembly will take place in person.

Traditionally held over the May long weekend, the annual meeting brings together teachers from across the province to debate ATA policy and set the annual budget. For the past two years the event has been held virtually due to public health restrictions brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. This year the event is scheduled to take place at a hotel in downtown Calgary.

Compared to previous in-person ARAs, some new restrictions will be in place to ensure the safety of all delegates, said associate executive secretary Robert Mazzotta.

"As this will be the first large gathering for many delegates, not everyone will have the same comfort level with being among many people," Mazzotta said. "We're asking delegates to be patient and kind with each other."

New for this year's ARA:

- Mask-wearing will be mandatory in all sessions, except if a valid medical exemption has been provided in advance. Delegates will each be provided with one K-95 mask.
- Food will not be permitted in the ballroom, only beverages.

ATA officials continue to monitor the Covid situation and are prepared to move ARA to a completely online event should the pandemic worsen significantly or if new protective measures are imposed by the chief medical officer of health.

"We're planning as if in-person is going to happen, but we also have a contingency plan in place, and we will implement that if necessary," Mazzotta said. ■



What is ARA?

The Annual Representative Assembly (ARA), or the parliament of the Association, is made up of 500 delegates from locals and the 20 members of the Association's executive body (Provincial Executive Council). ARA establishes policy, approves the Association's budget and sets fees for the various categories of membership. The 105th Annual Representative Assembly (ARA) will take place in downtown Calgary from May 21 to 23.

Code of conduct applies to social media presence



PITFALLS & PRECAUTIONS

Dan Grassick
ATA Secretary to Professional
Conduct Committees

Pitfalls and Precautions is a series that aims to educate teachers on professional conduct issues by highlighting situations addressed by the ATA Professional Conduct Committee.

As professionals, teachers are accountable for their words and actions — at school, after hours, in person and online. In addition to the *Teaching Profession Act* and the Code of Professional Conduct, the ATA's Professional Conduct Committee relies on legal precedents concerning teachers and other professionals to make its decisions about the potential unprofessional conduct of members.

When there are allegations that a teacher's online expression may be unprofessional, the committee often refers to *Strom v Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association*, a landmark decision that identifies a number of factors that should be considered by regulatory bodies when determining whether online speech (i.e., social media posting) by professionals constitutes unprofessional conduct. Paraphrased for teaching, these factors are, as follows:

1. Was the speech made while the teacher was on duty or otherwise acting in their professional capacity?
2. Did the teacher identify themselves as a teacher?
3. Is there a professional connection between the teacher and the individuals or institutions they criticized?
4. Did the speech relate to services provided to the teacher or their family or friends?
5. Was the speech the result of emotional distress or mental illness?
6. Was the teacher's criticism truthful and fair?
7. Was the speech published or available? If so, what was the size and nature of the audience?
8. Was the teacher's expression intended to contribute to social or political discourse about an important issue?
9. What is the nature and scope of the damage to the profession and the public interest?

Recently, the Professional Conduct Committee heard a case that focused on the negative comments a teacher made on social media about a news story. The news story, posted by a major media outlet to its Facebook account, concerned an injured student who attended school in a division that had previously employed the teacher. Rather than commenting on the subject of the news story, the teacher's comment was squarely directed at their former employer. In their comment, the investigated member identified themselves as a teacher and

shared negative comments about the division and its senior leadership.

In applying *Strom* to this teacher's case, the committee determined that the teacher's comment clearly identified them as a teacher, which lended credibility to their words in the eyes of the public. The teacher's comments were focused on their previous negative working relationship with their former employer, not with the specific matter of the injured student. The teacher was experiencing emotional distress at the time they posted, but they clearly remained angry at their former employer. The teacher's comments were vexatious, not truthful or fair social political commentary. The teacher's comment was made on the Facebook post of a major news outlet where it was viewed by hundreds of people. Given the number of reactions, comments and shares on the post, it is reasonable to assume that the member's words damaged the profession's public reputation to some degree. As such, the teacher was found guilty of unprofessional conduct and was issued a letter of reprimand and a \$250 fine. ■

If you need advice about maintaining your professionalism in our increasingly online world, or if you want to book an e-liability workshop for you and your colleagues, please call 1-800-232-7208 and ask to speak to Teacher Employment Services.

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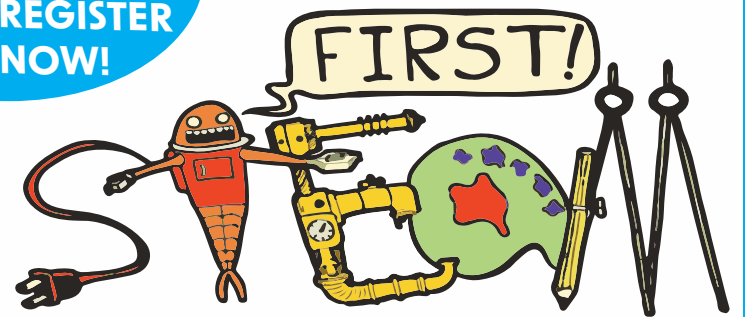
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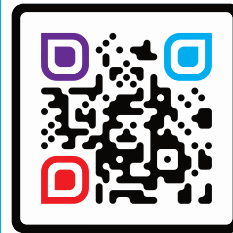
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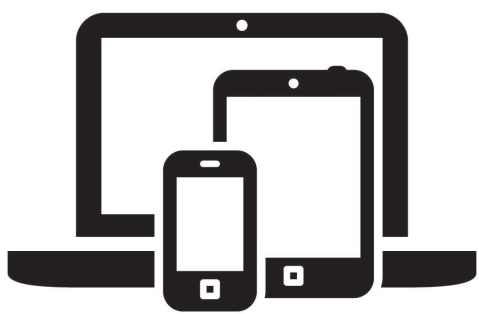
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TALENT

May 10, 2022 | Volume 56, Number 13

Hats On! FOR MENTAL HEALTH

Teachers and students across Alberta donned hats of all shapes and sizes for Hats On! for Mental Health Day on May 4. The campaign aims to raise awareness of the importance of good mental health. ★

Hats On took on a Star Wars theme for some, as the day coincided with May 4, a day when Star Wars fans put their enthusiasm on display.

Information on mental health and classroom resources are available at <http://canwetalk.ca>.



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