

## Welcome, new teachers

Vets share wisdom in 17 syllables. Page 16

Learn about your Association and how to get involved. Page 9

September 21, 2021 Volume 56, Number 2

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ATA president Jason Schilling speaks at the Alberta legislature on Sept. 11 during a protest of the new draft K-6 curriculum. See more photos on page 7.

## **PENSION WIN FOR TEACHERS**

#### Sustained pressure brings the big wins

Read Jonathan Teghtmeyer's editorial. Page 2

#### **Pension story contains** lessons. Will the government learn?

Read Dennis Theobald's Q&A.

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#### All teachers deserve credit

Read Off Script with ATA president Jason Schilling. Page 5

#### Lawsuit dropped amid long-awaited management agreement

ATRF retains control over pension investment policies. Page 5

#### **Truth and reconciliation**

Moving forward with respect and authenticity needs to be an everyday act. *Read Viewpoints on page 3.* 

#### **COVID** measures

School restrictions tighten amid declared health emergency. See story on page 4.



September 21, 2021 Volume 56, Number 2

The Alberta Teachers' Association, as the professional organization of teachers, promotes and advances public education, safeguards standards of professional practice and serves as the advocate for its members.

 $Editor-in-Chief: \textit{Jonathan Teghtmeyer} \mid jonathan.teghtmeyer@ata.ab.ca \mid 780-447-9477 \mid jonathan.teghtmeyer \mid jonathan.teghtmeyer$ 

Managing Editor: Cory Hare | cory.hare@ata.ab.ca | 780-447-9438

Advertising: Trevor Battye Advertising Sales | trevor@tbasales.ca | 1-778-773-9397

Designer: John Labots Graphic Design Inc. Copy Editors: ATA Editorial Staff

## Pressure must be sustained to earn the big wins



#### **EDITORIAL**

Jonathan Teghtmeyer ATA News Editor-in-Chief

I'm not a lawyer, but I can only assume that when the judge tells you that she's not buying your arguments in the middle of a hearing, things are not going well for you.

This was apparently the situation in an Edmonton Court of Queen's Bench courtroom in early September when the case of the Alberta Teachers' Association v Her Majesty the Queen (not the first or last case with that title) was being argued. In this instance, the parties were discussing the validity of Finance Minister Travis Toews's order imposing an investment management agreement on the Alberta Teachers' Retirement Fund (ATRF).

To be clear, the judge directed her statement about arguments being off base towards the government lawyers.

While the case was being heard, finishing touches were being put on a new agreement – an actual "we agree" agreement — that would replace the imposed agreement.

It was worth noting that the ATA was not party to the negotiations and that

the ATRF was not an applicant in the court case, so that explains in part why both things continued to move along independently of one another. Yet, they converged around the same time in early September.

A win in court would have been good to overturn the offensive ministerial order, but the antecedent problem would still remain and we would still need ATRF and the Alberta Investment Management Corporation (AIMCo) to come up with an agreement.

Instead, having AIMCo as a willing

a negotiated agreement in September 2021 that leaves the vast amount of control in the hands of ATRF?

Two interrelated things: a change in leadership at AIMCo and the sustained persistent advocacy of teachers.

We know that teachers were already very active in pushing back against Bill 22, which compelled the forced marriage between ATRF and AIMCo. Teachers hammered MLA offices with phone calls and correspondence at numerous touchpoints through the fall of 2019 and much of 2020.

d of teachers has to be held up as a major reason for this win. We must pause to recognize and celebrate the success of this advocacy.

approach to negotiation.

Pensions are not the only front where we have been battling in the past few years. Curriculum, COVID provisions, cuts and classroom conditions are all areas where teachers and the government have been at odds recently. And teachers were long without a win on these issues. So, the win on pensions represents a significant ray of hope that shows that our efforts mattered.

along with a change of leadership at

AIMCo, resulted in a new attitude and

So, the significant, sustained advocacy

These other issues remain unresolved and collective bargaining may get added to the pile soon, too. But the lesson learned from the pension fight is that advocacy matters ... and pressure mounts. An immediate win and reversal may not come on any issue right away, but sustaining that pressure over time really helps ensure that the win comes eventually. So even when you think it is lost, keep up the pressure.

As the saying goes, the darkest hour is just before the dawn.

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

## fight is that advocacy matters ...

partner at the table, negotiating an agreement that complies with the interests of teachers and ensures that the ATRF remains in control of the investment policy for teacher pensions is a big win for teachers.

So, what changed? How did we get from an obstinate finance minister drafting a ministerial order in December 2020 that gave AIMCo a veto power over the ATRF's investment policy to The volume was cranked up again when the minister's order was announced in January of this year. A strong, significant social media campaign saw teachers calling out MLAs who had promised teacher control over pensions.

These promises, brought to the forefront through teacher advocacy, became an important part of the court challenge. And ultimately the pressure,

## Could pension resolution foreshadow meaningful engagement?



Q & A

Dennis Theobald ATA Executive Secretary

**Question:** So now that we have settled the ATRF/AIMCo mess, what do we have to say to the government?

**Answer:** Answer: Well, I'm not the sort of person to gloat and say to my friends in government, "I told you so" ... OK, who am I kidding?

In this column in January I wrote that the problem created by the minister of finance's ministerial order, which induced the Alberta Teachers' Retirement Fund (ATRF) to enter into a shotgun wedding with the Alberta **Investment Management Corporation** (AIMCo), was "eminently solvable and at no cost to taxpayers or teachers" and that all that was necessary was for the government "to direct AIMCo to return to the table and arrive at an agreement with ATRF that will preserve a role for AIMCo in managing investments at the direction of ATRF, but also allow ATRF to manage by itself, or through other independent investment managers, investment strategies and approaches

that are beyond AIMCo's competence or capacity"

This message was communicated directly to senior political officials in the ministry of finance.

Effectively, the termination of the Association's court case as a result of the ATRF and AIMCo entering into a voluntary investment management agreement has achieved most of that solution, and AIMCo and the ATRF will now be able to move ahead constructively to the mutual benefit of plan members and Alberta taxpayers.

we did not get to the point where the court would have rendered a judgment, hopefully this experience will deter the government from attempting something similar in the future.

As for the long and very expensive court process that led to this outcome, the best that can be said is that between the legal fees paid by AIMCo, the ATRF, Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Alberta and the Association, perhaps somewhere, some orphan Porsche will be a bit closer to finding its forever home.

Start listening to people who are most directly affected by your initiatives and pay attention to people who know more than the politicians ...

Furthermore, the Association's legal council was spectacularly effective in advancing novel arguments in administrative law about the obligations of government to ensure that its regulations do not overstep legislation and that its conduct abides by standards of fairness in such matters. Although

More generally, there is a takeaway for government, assuming it is willing to take it away: start listening to people who are most directly affected by your initiatives and pay attention to people who know more than the politicians (and even civil servants) do.

As president Jason Schilling points

out in his Off Script piece in this issue, it took a ferocious and sustained advocacy effort directed primarily at MLAs on the part of active and retired teachers to finally gain the government's attention and create some positive movement. While advocacy after the fact can work, participating in meaningful consultation in advance is far more efficient and is far more likely to achieve positive outcomes.

It is notable that whether it be a pension issue, or the management of its response to the pandemic in schools or its revisions to the draft curriculum, this government's current grief has been the direct result of its conscious decisions to largely ignore those with direct experience and expertise, in favour of advancing an ideological agenda. The good news is that Alberta's teachers have considerable capacity for forgiveness and a commitment to advancing the public interest, so they, and the Association as their representative, would be pleased to re-engage if provided a meaningful opportunity to do so.

Oh, and I told you so.

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

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## Truth and reconciliation needs to happen every day



#### **VIEWPOINTS**

**Melissa Purcell ATA Indigenous Education** 

his past June, the federal government **▲** passed legislation to make Sept. 30 a federal statutory holiday called the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. This announcement was a direct response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's call to action number 80, which called for such a day to be established to "honour Survivors, their families, and communities, and ensure that public commemoration of the history and legacy of residential schools remains a vital component of the reconciliation process."

Prior to this announcement, since 2013, many across this province and country have been acknowledging Orange Shirt Day on Sept. 30, a date selected because this was the time of year when children were taken from their homes and sent to residential schools across this country. The foundational story for Orange Shirt Day involves six-year-old Phyllis Webstad, who, on her first day at St. Joseph Mission Residential School in Williams Lake, B.C., had her specifically chosen orange shirt taken away from her. This became a metaphor for all that was taken from children who attended residential schools in Canada over many generations.

We must remember Phyllis Webstad's story. This year, we must also remember the children who never returned home, children whose remains have been found, and will continue to be found, at unmarked graves at residential schools across this country.

We must remember these truths. We need to reflect and recognize the history and legacy of residential schools and their lasting impact on survivors, their families and communities. Although it is important to take time on Sept. 30 to engage in such reflections, it is more important that these reflections and actions become part of our everyday lives.

Reconciliation includes non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples walking alongside each other, creating spaces and opportunities for authentic and respectful relationships, and working toward building a new way to collectively move forward. There are many paths forward, but we must ensure that we are moving forward in the same direction by continuously seeking and learning truths with open hearts and minds. It means continuing to be guided by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples of Canada, and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls' Calls for Justice.

The Alberta Teachers' Association recognizes the important role that teachers play in truth and reconciliation. We have a personal, professional and collective responsibility to engage in Indigenous education and actively contribute to truth and reconciliation as part of our lifelong learning journey. We must ensure that this engagement is part of our everyday lives through authentic student and professional learning experiences. We must create spaces for coming together to learn in the spirit of truth and reconciliation through education. We must ensure that we create welcoming schools and communities where each and every child feels safe and cared for, and where every child matters.

I am inspired by this quote by the Honourable Murray Sinclair, chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, as shared at the commission's final event: "As Commissioners we have described for you the mountain. We have shown you the path to the top. We call upon you to do the climbing."

As teachers it is our responsibility to climb that mountain and continue to put in the hard work, seek the truth and share this learning with others.

We have much work to do to honour residential school survivors, their families and communities in our classrooms and school communities as part of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. But we must ensure that this important work doesn't start and end with this day. Wear orange on Sept. 30, but also remember that authentically acknowledging the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and Orange Shirt Day is more than simply wearing an orange shirt. Let's take the time to reflect, reaffirm and commit to contributing to the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, today and every day, and strengthen the heartbeat to truth and reconciliation through our individual and collective efforts.

#### Resources available

The ATA has the following Indigenous education guides that include resources and lesson plans:

- National Day for Truth & Reconciliation (teachers-ab. libguides.com)
- Journée nationale de la vérité et de la réconciliation (teachers-ab. libguides.com)
- ATA Stepping Stones series (teachers.ab.ca > My ATA > Professional Development > Indigenous Education and Walking Together > Resources)

#### **YOUR VIEWS**

#### F FACEBOOK FEEDBACK

#### On news of an agreement between the Alberta Teachers' **Retirement Fund and AIMCo**

#### Karen Munro

Awesome news on a battle we should never have had to fight. Next step is stopping the horrendously proposed curriculum draft.

#### **Francine Desjardins**

Bravo teachers! Thank you ATA! Shame

#### **Greg Freer**

It is a sad state of affairs that so much time and energy went into something that never should have happened in the first place.

#### **Karie Jean Evans**

Outstanding work! Thank you Jason, Bob Cocking, Daniel Nelles and so many others who worked on this relentlessly. Thank you to all the members of our communities who are NOT teachers, who supported teachers and spent time writing letters on behalf of educators. Thank you for having our back!

#### Lori Bland

Fantastic news! Thank you to all those who worked hard to protect my pension and all ATA members.

#### **Gary Marcellus**

Great work between lobbying, ATA working behind the scenes and the work of Field Law. Together we can move mountains (and the UCP).

#### Gordon Douglas Wilson

This is a win for teachers but let's not forget others like the nurses!

#### Ev Dunnigan

Bravo! Thank you for supporting the teachers and ATA members!

#### Mary Welke

Thank you to all the ATA members who came together to support this action.

#### **Gerry Enns**

This gov't has arbitrarily imposed its will on so many aspects of our lives, often with no consultation with stakeholders. That the public must repeatedly demonstrate their resolve through massive campaigns, including legal action, has proved successful, but exhausting.

The UCP are bullies who are only looking out for their rich supporters and friends of Kenney. I am so glad that this has been a successful outcome, but I have two pieces of advice for teachers, the ATA and the ATRF. Don't think the UCP won't try these shenanigans again, and when they do, don't wait so long to punch the bully in the nose.



#### FOR THE RECORD

I have never ever seen a curriculum as crappy as this one.

- University of Alberta curriculum expert Carla Peck speaking at a rally at the Alberta legislature on Sept. 11.

#### **CORRECTION**

In the Aug. 31 issue of the ATA News, under the headline "Ready ... Set ... Grow," the incorrect date was listed for the upcoming conference of the English Language Arts Council (ELAC), which is scheduled for April 29-30, 2022. The ATA News apologizes for the error.

## Schools face increased restrictions

#### ATA pauses return to in-person operations

**ATA News Staff** 

New restrictions on movement and masking requirements don't go far enough to protect students and teachers, says Jason Schilling, president of the Alberta Teachers' Association.

On Sept. 15, the province announced it was reintroducing mandatory masking in all workplaces and indoor spaces, including schools, where masks are now required for students in grades 4 and up and for all staff and teachers. Schools that can implement an alternate COVID safety plan can be exempted from mandatory masking, while elementary schools are required to implement class cohorting.

"While these new restrictions bring more consistency across the province and will help provide some additional protection to students and teachers, the government is late to this party and didn't go far enough," Schilling said.

For months the ATA has been calling for a more careful return-to-school plan, and the government's latest measures fall short of expectations, Schilling said.

The ATA continues to advocate for additional measures such as contact

tracing conducted by Alberta Health Services, regular consultations with stakeholders and improvements to ventilation in schools.

#### ATA operations in holding pattern

Meanwhile, plans to resume in-person operations at the Alberta Teachers' Association had already been put on hold due to a previously announced recommendation that such plans be paused. The public health emergency declared on Sept. 15 mandated that employees work from home unless their physical presence was required, reinforcing the plan that the ATA had already put in place.

"We're in a holding pattern right now due to the restrictions mandated by the province and also our own consultations with health-care experts," said associate executive secretary Brian Andrais.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the ATA's buildings in Edmonton and Calgary have been closed while the vast majority of employees have worked from home, and the various meetings that the ATA conducts have mostly been held virtually.

# We all have an interest in public education. Vote on October 18. Vote4Kids.ca The Alberta Teachers' Association

ALBERTA TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

The ATA is encouraging teachers to become informed about their local school board elections and to make choices that are best for public education ... and students.

# Teachers should engage in school board elections

Elissa Corsi ATA News Staff

Teachers are encouraged to become active participants in their local school board elections.

Alberta Teachers' Association president Jason Schilling points out that school boards are elected by and accountable to the communities they serve, not just to the parents of students enrolled in school.

"School board elections concern all citizens—whether you have children in school or not, we all have an interest in public education," Schilling said.

He also noted that, collectively, school board elections helps ensure boards manage more than \$6 billion best candidates are selected."

in public funds dedicated to public education.

"Trustees have a fiduciary duty to act honestly and in good faith," Schilling said.

On behalf of the electors, they make decisions about the board operation. Trustees represent the board and communicate with the public at school and board events and in meetings with school councils, parents or other members of the public.

"We elect trustees to be stewards of our interests and to make reasoned and responsible decisions," Schilling said. "The full and active participation of all citizens, including teachers, in school board elections helps ensure that the best candidates are selected."

#### **CROSS-COUNTRY SNAPSHOT**

#### What's happening elsewhere in Canada?

#### **British Columbia**

- Full-time in-person learning has resumed, as well as extracurricular activities such as sports and music. Masks are mandatory for all staff, as well as Grades 4–12 students. Cleaning protocols and handwashing routines continue to be a priority.
- The province has committed \$87.5
  million for increased ventilation and
  improvements to school buildings.
  While the government continues
  to recommend vaccines, they have
  not issued a vaccination mandate
  for teachers or school staff.

#### Yukon

• Full-time in-class instruction has resumed in the Yukon. Masks are only recommended for school staff and students. Physical distancing is encouraged in school common areas. Hand sanitizing and washing will continue to play an important role in student safety. Seat assignments and mandatory masking are required on school buses.

#### **Northwest Territories**

- Physical distancing is no longer required for Grades 7–12. Masks will continue to be mandatory on school buses and in common areas in school buildings. Masks are not required in the classroom.
- Extracurricular activities, such as drama, choir or band, have been suspended, and physical education programs or extracurricular activities that are high contact will not be allowed.

#### Saskatchewan

• The 2021-2022 Safe Schools Plan describes a school year that will

operate in a prepandemic mode. Many COVID restrictions, such as masking or physical distancing, no longer exist. The Saskatchewan Health Authority continues to work with schools on contact tracing and quarantine protocols.

 Ultimately, school divisions will decide their own pandemic safety regulations. Those plans must be presented to the government for approval. The Saskatchewan government has promised \$21 million in funding for additional supports for students returning to school.

#### Nunavut

- While the territory is currently free of COVID-19 cases, it is not business as usual for schools. Enhanced cleaning is still taking place in schools. Students are advised to avoid any physical contact. Group activities are being limited. The sharing of food and drink between students is discouraged.
- Masks are not required in schools as long as there remains zero transmission of COVID-19 in that school region.

#### Manitoba

- Manitoba schools are open to nearnormal operations. Masks are recommended but not mandatory for school staff and students. PPEs will be provided in schools. Cohorts in the younger grades are continuing but have increased from 30 students to 48.
- Notification of COVID-19 cases continues in schools, as well as regular updates posted on a public dashboard. An emphasis on

CROSS-COUNTRY SNAPSHOT continued on page 7

#### What school boards do:

- Establish goals and priorities and set the overall direction for the school jurisdiction
- Advocate for public education and the local school jurisdiction
- Develop, acquire or offer courses, programs and/or instructional materials
- Adopt an annual budget and allocate funds provided by the provincial government
- Provide for parental and community involvement in schools
- Maintain and operate school buildings, buses and other board property
- Communicate with stakeholders (staff, students, parents or guardians, the public, Alberta Education) about school jurisdiction plans and results
- Select a superintendent of schools and oversee their administrative

#### **GET INFORMED**

Information about the issues and the candidates is available at Vote4kids.ca.

Election day: Oct. 18.

## Pension deal a big win for teachers -**ATA** president

ATRF retains control over pension investment policies; ATA drops lawsuit

**ATA News Staff** 

The Alberta Teachers' Association ▲ has dropped a lawsuit against the province since an agreement has been reached that will see control over the investment policies for teacher pensions remain with the Alberta Teachers' Retirement Fund (ATRF).

Reached in early September, the investment management agreement negotiated between the ATRF and AIMCo is a victory for teachers and the ATA, said president Jason Schilling.

'Teachers mounted a strong, wide-reaching, relentless campaign in defence of their pensions, which provided the ATRF with the backing they needed to negotiate an effective agreement that protects the interests of teachers," Schilling said.

The new investment management agreement replaces the previous one that was imposed by a ministerial order by Finance Minister Travis Toews in December 2020. The new agreement removes a controversial veto provided to AIMCo over investment directions made by the ATRF.

In a statement announcing the new agreement, the ATRF reported that the deal ensures that AIMCo must implement the investment policies established by the ATRF and provides for meaningful accountability measures and a commitment to collaboration and transparency regarding how pension assets are managed.

"Our team has kept the best interests of our plans paramount throughout these many months, and I'm very pleased with the terms we have formalized in the [agreement]," said ATRF CEO Rod Matheson.

ATRF Board chair Sandra Johnston said that the negotiated IMA respects the role of the ATRF and enshrines its fiduciary responsibilities to the plans. ATRF said that they appreciated the

support of members and emphasized that addressing members' concerns and the long-term health of their pensions was always a focus.

#### **Drawn-out negotiations**

The situation traces back to Bill 22, passed in the fall of 2019, which required the ATRF to use AIMCo as its sole investment manager, despite a longstanding history of strong returns by the ATRF. The bill required the negotiation of an investment management agreement between the ATRF and AIMCo to be concluded by June 30, 2020. The ATRF previously reported that AIMCo was not willing to agree to key terms that the ATRF felt protected the board's role and the interests of the plans.

In the fall of 2020, AIMCo pulled out of negotiations with the ATRF and shortly after that Minister Toews made his order imposing an agreement.

The imposed agreement prompted the Association to launch a lawsuit in March 2021, arguing that Toews's ministerial order was unreasonable and should be declared invalid by the courts. Documents submitted with the court application said that the conditions imposed by the order were inconsistent with the Teachers' Pension Plans Act and that a duty of procedural fairness owed to the Association had been breached.

That court challenge was heard before the Court of Queen's Bench on Sept. 2 and 3.

The timing of the court case and the reaching of a replacement agreement were not coincidental, Schilling said. He believes that the court case was going very well for the Association, noting that the judge remarked at one point that she was not buying the Government of Alberta's arguments related to certain sections of the agreement.

Schilling believes that the prospects of the government losing in court and the installation of a new AIMCo CEO



relations have been instrumental in spurring this resolution.

"Our court challenge against the imposed IMA – backed up by significant pressure from teachers - changed the game," said Schilling. "Under the new CEO, AIMCo appears to realize that they need to be responsive to clients and that they will be held accountable for their duty to teachers as the investment manager."

#### New agreement offers vast improvements

The ministerial order provided AIMCo with the ability to reject parts of the ATRF's investment policy, with little ability for recourse from the ATRF. The new agreement, which replaces the ministerial order, allows for a rejection of ATRF policy only if AIMCo finds it "impossible" to comply. Impossibility is the highest possible threshold that could be used for rejecting a policy.

The new agreement clearly establishes that the ATRF has fiduciary obligations, including the setting of investment policy, that are acknowledged and recognized by AIMCo. It also clarifies AIMCo's role as a discretionary investment manager by clearly outlining the areas where

where AIMCo must consult with the

The agreement also outlines a fair process for dispute resolution in which unresolved disputes are referred to an independent third-party arbitrator, appointed if necessary by the courts.

Schilling said that this agreement will reset the relationship with AIMCo and will allow the ATRF to engage effectively with AIMCo in a way that respects each group's appropriate roles.

ATA executive secretary Dennis Theobald said that the conclusion of this agreement addresses all of the issues identified by the Association and, importantly, provides the ATRF with full control of its investment policy.

"With this agreement in place, the Association has achieved everything it hoped to achieve through the legal action," he said. "The ministerial order is no longer in effect, and as a result the Association's legal action challenging it is moot."

The ATA has notified the Court that it is discontinuing its legal action.

"It is very important to understand that we would not have gotten here unless we had taken on the legal action," Theobald said, "and, more importantly, we wouldn't be here without the persistent advocacy of teachers."



The announcement of the investment **⊥** management agreement between ATRF and AIMCo is a big win for teachers, who have been relentless advocates in defence of their pensions. The agreement respects the role of the ATRF and enshrines its responsibilities as fiduciary of the plans. Teachers, active and retired, mounted a strong, wide-reaching, relentless campaign in defence of their pensions. I believe the actions taken by teachers provided the ATRF with the backing they needed to negotiate an effective agreement that protects the interests of teachers. The only thing better would have been a repeal of the pension elements of Bill 22.

I was talking with a colleague the other day just after the agreement was announced. She congratulated me on it and expressed her relief. It was some much-needed good news. She went on to thank me for the advocacy I had been doing around the issue.

I pointed out that this victory and success belongs to every teacher in the province who took to their keyboards, sending tens of thousands of emails to their MLAs. It belongs to teachers who picked up the phone and called their

## Pension win belongs to all teachers

MLAs, or made appointments to talk to them about how this hijacking of the pension was not in the best interest of teachers and Albertans.

The success belongs to teachers who did not take silence as an answer and demanded that MLAs engage in a conversation that went beyond the talking points or form emails. In short, the success of this advocacy action is yours. And I cannot thank you enough for your relentless advocacy, especially during such challenging times.

That's the thing about advocacy - it's not easy and it's not quick either. It can be exhausting to keep at it day after day. I have often equated it to a marathon rather than a sprint. The teachers of this province proved that they have the perseverance and willpower to fight for what they believe in. I encourage you savour this success and strap those shoes on. As someone said on social media, curriculum is next.

> I welcome your comments. Contact me at jason.schilling@ata.ab.ca.



## We appreciate Alberta Teachers for going above and beyond

For World Teacher's Day on October 5<sup>th</sup> we would like to recognize you and thank you for your hard work and dedication.

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#### "Ditch the draft"

Hundreds of protesters gathered at the Alberta legislature on Sept. 11 to voice their displeasure with the government's draft K-6 curriculum. Hosted by advocacy group Albertans for a Quality Curriculum, the event featured speeches by ATA president Jason Schilling, Alberta School Councils' Association president Brandi Rai and a variety of teachers and education experts. "Ditch the draft" was a chant that echoed through the legislature grounds.



#### **CROSS-COUNTRY SNAPSHOT** continued from page 4

vaccination for students 12-17 will continue with vaccine clinics planned across the system.

The Manitoba government has earmarked \$40 million for additional staffing, learning and technology, and health and safety.

- Masking is mandatory for all students Grade 1 and higher. Elementary students will continue to be cohorted in their classrooms and high school students will not be allowed to take more than two courses at a time, resulting in another year using the quadmester system.
- Extracurricular activities such as interschool sports, music, choir, field trips and assemblies have resumed. Cafeteria and computer labs have reopened.
- The province has announced funding for ventilation, as well as high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters in all classrooms without mechanical ventilation.

#### Québec

- The Québec government has eliminated classroom bubbles but has mandated masks for all students and staff while in common areas. Masks can be removed in the classroom.
- Extracurricular activities like sports are permitted but may require a vaccine passport to participate. Students have assigned seating in school buses to facilitate contact tracing.
- Rapid screening tests will be provided to regions with higher case numbers. These regions may be susceptible to the introduction of stricter safety measures.

#### **New Brunswick**

Cohorting for K-8 is no longer taking place. Masking is mandatory in all common areas, and schools will be expected to manage congested areas such as hallways and boot rooms. Students are expected to regularly disinfect

their workspaces. These measures shall remain in place until 90 per cent of students aged 12-19 are double vaccinated.

• A working group on ventilation systems in schools was established early in the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and continues to work with schools to improve air quality in classrooms.

#### **Prince Edward Island**

- Masks are recommended when moving through common areas but may be removed once seated in the classroom. Masks are also recommended on school buses. The province says enhanced cleaning and disinfection, handwashing and screening will continue to play an important role in how schools manage COVID-19.
- The province has also committed to hiring additional teachers, education assistants, youth service workers, autism consultants, bus drivers, cleaners and administrative support workers to handle the long-term impact the pandemic has had on schools, staff and students.

#### Nova Scotia

- At the time of writing, a mandatory mask order is currently in place for all school buildings in Nova Scotia. The province is expected to enter phase five of its reopening plan by mid-September. Phase five may result in masking in schools becoming optional.
- Extracurricular activities like band, music classes and sports have resumed, as well as the use of lockers, cubbies and cafeterias.
- The province vows to continue its inspection and maintenance of school ventilation systems.

#### Newfoundland

- Newfoundland's back-to-school plan has students returning to the classroom full time rather than the blended learning approach used last year. Cohorts and physical distancing are not required, but schools are asked to avoid crowding in common areas. Masking is mandatory on school buses but only encouraged in the school setting.
- Sports activities, field trips and school lunch programs have resumed.

## **Annual** conference accepts all substitutes

**Cory Hare ATA News Staff** 

ubstitute teaching is a specialized craft and an **D**upcoming conference presented by the Alberta Teachers' Association is being designed specifically for the needs of these specialists.

Taking place over the course of a Friday evening and all day Saturday, the virtual conference is free to attend and is sure to appeal to all substitutes, said Shelley Magnusson, ATA staff advisor to the Substitute Teachers Committee.

'We have a very eclectic lineup of speakers and sessions, and I'm hoping that all substitute teachers will be able to find something that appeals to them in this conference," Magnusson said.

While the annual Substitute Teachers' Conference is an excellent opportunity for networking and professional development, its sessions are also geared toward the unique role that substitutes play.

The conference will open with a keynote address from certified inclusion specialist Marni Panas, who

will speak about inclusion in the classroom and the difference a teacher can make in how a child feels about themselves.

"I'm really looking forward to hearing Marni Panas speak," Magnusson said. "I've heard her speak many times before and it's always new and interesting to hear voices on inclusion."

Among the many topics covered during Saturday's breakout



Marni Panas, keynote speaker

sessions will be staff wellness, financial wellness, physical literacy and using Indigenous games to achieve learning outcomes.

Since the conference is virtual, there are no limits to the number of attendees at any given session, and Magnusson encourages teachers to drop in for just one or two sessions if they'd prefer to do so rather than attend the entire event.

"I encourage anybody who is thinking about attending the conference to give it a good look," she

#### **CONFERENCE DETAILS**

Date: Oct. 22–23 Cost: Free Location: Virtual (Zoom) Registration deadline: Oct. 15 Session details and online registration are available at <a href="https://cutt.ly/2021STC">https://cutt.ly/2021STC</a>.



#### **NOTICE**

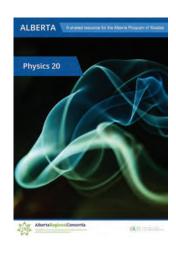
On June 25, 2021, a hearing committee of the Professional Conduct Committee established under the Teaching Profession Act found that Deborah Doonanco engaged in unprofessional conduct. The hearing committee declared Doonanco permanently ineligible for membership in the Alberta Teachers' Association, effective June 25, 2021.

#### The Alberta Collaboration for Learning

Asynchronous and synchronous course and digital resources for the 2021-2022 school year











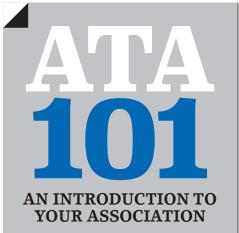
#### What is the Alberta Collaboration for Learning?

School divisions from across Alberta have built a comprehensive library of Alberta Program of Studies content in both synchronous and asynchronous formats. From 2019-2021, more than 140 professionals (teachers, editors, copy editors, proofing staff, instructional designers, curriculum specialists and online learning professionals) created a full suite of vetted year-long Alberta online K-12 courses.

In addition, the school divisions have also started to replace textbooks and recommended reading resources in digital copyright-free formats. By the end of summer 2021 they curated more than 150 literature, science and math resources, along with a remarkable collection of 40 Alberta curriculum textbooks.

Learn about what the Alberta Collaboration for Learning has completed to date at hapara.com/alberta





## Involvement starts at the local level



ATA 101 is a feature series aimed at informing members, both new and experienced, about various aspects of the Alberta Teachers' Association.

This first instalment explores the various volunteer opportunities that exist in ATA locals. Watch for additional instalments in upcoming issues of the ATA News.

There are 55 ATA locals in the province, and they all offer a wealth of volunteer roles suited to a variety of interests, so whether you crave to be politically active or prefer to work behind the scenes, there's likely a role for you in your local.

Many teachers who are involved in the activities of the Alberta Teachers' Association got their start when they were new teachers, often by attending a meeting of their ATA local.

'When I was a first-year teacher, my former mentor teacher invited me to a meeting. I went, liked what I heard and never looked back," recalls ATA president Jason Schilling, whose story mirrors that of many ATA volunteers, elected officials and staff officers.

"Before I knew it, I was on the Negotiating Subcommittee," Schilling said. "I had no inkling that I'd eventually become president of the provincial ATA. I just kept taking on roles that interested me. The work felt important, and I liked feeling like I was contributing."

Here is a summary of roles that exist in most ATA locals.

#### Local executive



- typically includes positions most of us are familiar with, such as president, vicepresident, past president, secretary and treasurer.
- It's common for members to work up to executive positions by first serving in other roles, but some are elected directly to the executive as their first volunteer role.
- The executive members are typically part of local council and CSR, as well.
- Most local council meetings are open and welcoming, allowing any member to observe and find out more about the local and its activities.

#### **School** representative (SR)



- School reps act as a conduit between school staff and the ATA. SRs receive and gather information from the ATA and their local and bring it to the attention of teachers in their school. When teachers approach them with questions or concerns, SRs direct them to the appropriate expertise in the local or at Barnett House or SARO.
- Along with the local executive, SRs are usually part of the council that provides governance for the local. In that capacity, they attend council meetings and represent the views of their school's staff. Some locals call this local council, and others call it the council of school representatives (CSR).
- School rep is the most common entry role for teachers who are new to volunteering in their local.

#### Local communications officer (LCO)



- The local communications officer looks after the various communications functions a local might undertake, such as a newsletter, its website, social media, media relations, advertising and event management.
- This role is another common entry point for teachers new to ATA work, and Barnett House provides a significant amount of training for members in this
- "If people have an interest in communications activities, this is a great way to practise their skills," says Jonathan Teghtmeyer, the ATA's associate co-ordinator of communications, who got his start in this role in his local.

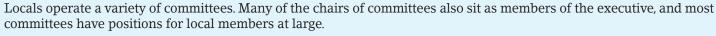
#### Local political engagement officer



The local political engagement officer keeps local members engaged in political events and issues. They

- stay aware of political goings-on,
- communicate these with members,
- organize ways to bring members together with elected officials,
- engage in campaigns to make members aware of candidates and issues, and
- encourage members to participate in political activities and vote.

#### **Committees**



#### **Professional Development Committee**

- The Professional Development Committee organizes professional development activities within the local.
- There is often room on the committee for new members, and it is a good option for new teachers. Being a member of this committee is less political than other positions, and many teachers gravitate toward the committee as they find the work engaging and fulfilling.

#### **Teacher Board Advisory Committee**

- The Teacher Board Advisory Committee enables the local to have conversations with the board about issues unrelated to bargaining.
- In some locals, this committee is populated only by members of the executive: others include members elected at large.
- In some locals, this committee is entrenched in the collective agreement.

#### **Teacher Welfare Committee**

- The Teacher Welfare Committee oversees the negotiation of local collective agreements.
- The committee deals with questions and concerns related to the collective agreement and other monetary and working condition matters, such as maternity leaves, benefits, pensions and grievances. It often serves as a liaison between the ATA's collective bargaining department and local teachers.
- The committee may include a representative from each school, or representation designed to cover various teaching assignments, such as teachers of various grade levels, administrators and substitute teachers.

#### **Political Engagement Committee**

- The Political Engagement Committee exists to support the activities of the political engagement officer.
- The committee sometimes comprises just one person: the political engagement officer.

#### **Communications Committee**

- The Communications Committee exists to support the activities of the local communications officer.
- The committee sometimes comprises just one person: the local communications officer.

#### These other committees may exist in a local:

- Diversity, Equity and Human Rights
- Women in Leadership
- Substitute Teachers
- Administration Service to Members
- Teachers' Convention

For more information about volunteering at the local level, contact your school rep, local president or other active volunteer.







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Oct. 16, 2021

Register by Oct. 14, 2021

Oct. 23, 2021

Register by Oct. 21, 2021

Sign up for one or both clinics at

apega.ca/rock-fossil

Register by

**CALGARY** 

May 14, 2022, at the University of Calgary's Olympic Oval

**GLYMPICS** 

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geoscience problem-

solving challenges as you

compete alongside other

across the province—in

person or virtually.

Mar. 19, 2022, at the

University of Alberta

Pavilion (Butterdome)

Nov. 17, 2021

**EDMONTON** 

teams from grades 1 to 12

Olympics is back! Get ready to tackle engineering and

 Register by Feb. 4, 2022

#### **VIRTUAL**

- Register by Feb. 4, 2022
- Submissions due May 19, 2022

Register now at

apega.ca/science-olympics

For more information, email

outreach@apega.ca



The Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta

## Online this year! October 22 (eve)-23, 2021

Register online at https://cutt.ly/2021STC

Registration deadline—October 15, 2021





#### The Alberta Teachers' Association

The Alberta Teachers' Association invites applications for the position of

### EXECUTIVE STAFF OFFICER, GOVERNMENT-DISCIPLINE

Competition: ESO5/21 Location: Calgary

Commencement: on or about December 1, 2021

This executive staff officer will assist in the work of the Government–Discipline program area with duties that may include: presentations and facilitating workshops to Association groups; acting on committees; and carrying out special projects from other areas of Association operations as assigned. Particular emphasis will be placed on activities relating to Association's enforcement of the Code of Professional Conduct and Practice Review. This position will undertake professional conduct and practice review cases as assigned: carry out investigations and prepare related correspondence. If a hearing is required, act as presenting officer. General information regarding the Government program area and the services it provides is available in the Programs and Services section on the ATA website.

Candidates must demonstrate

- Effective written and oral communication skills;
- Ability to foster effective working relationships with both internal and external stakeholders;
- Experience with regulatory requirements concerning teacher certification and professional discipline;
- Knowledge of and skill in investigative and interviewing techniques;
- Strong organization skills;
- Attention to detail; and the
- Ability to work independently.

In addition, the following are required:

- A valid teaching certificate and a minimum of five years of successful teaching experience in public education
- Awareness and ability to find and apply legislation, policy and the Education Act
- Ability to undertake travel and evening/weekend work

The ability to work in the French language will be considered an asset.

Total compensation includes a starting salary of \$136,000, employer-paid benefits as stipulated in a collective agreement and pensionable service under the Teachers' Pension Plan of the Alberta Teachers' Retirement Fund. The initial location will be in Calgary, but future assignments may be to any present or future Association office or program area. Duties are to commence on or about December 1, 2021.

Applicants should quote position ESO5/21 and include the names, phone numbers and e-mail addresses of at least two references who are not Association employees or elected officials of its provincial executive. Applications must be received by 1600 on Wednesday, October 6, 2021 and should be addressed to

Ms Kathryn Dick Human Resources Director The Alberta Teachers' Association 11010 142 Street NW Edmonton AB T5N 2R1 E-mail: hr@ata.ab.ca

For more information, please see our website at www.teachers.ab.ca.



## **Exploring Alberta's Wildlife:** CLASSROOM KIT

The Alberta Professional Outfitters Society (APOS) is proud to offer a classroom wildlife education kit. It is designed for Grades 3 and 4 and aligns with Alberta Education curriculum goals. The package explores wildlife identification and the role that sustainable use plays in conservation. Along with easy-to-follow lesson plans, an APOS member can be available to assist in the classroom. These kits are available on loan to Alberta teachers at no cost.

To request a classroom kit, please email info@apos.ab.ca with your name, contact information, address, and school. If you are interested in the kits for Grades 5 or 6, please email info@apos.ab.ca as these kits are currently being developed and we can put you on a waiting list.

For more information, visit www.apos.ab.ca/Community/WildlifeEducation info@apos.ab.ca • 780-414-0249



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#### For advertising information,

contact Trevor Battye at Trevor Battye Advertising Sales 1-778-773-9397 trevor@tbasales.ca

#### Next deadline

Thursday, Sept. 30, 2021, 4 p.m. (Publication date Oct. 12, 2021) Advertisers are encouraged to book early – space is limited. **Circulation:** 38,000

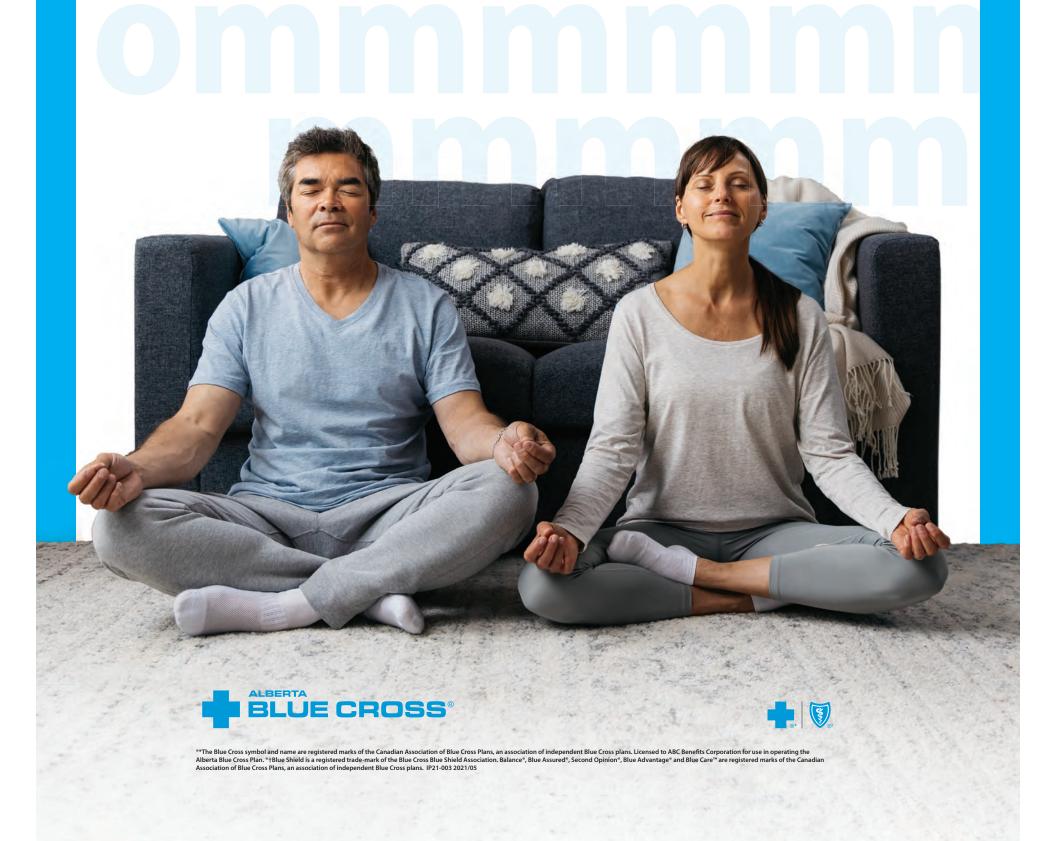
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#### SAVE THE DATE NOVEMBER 22-23, 2021



**TSanimals.ca** 



\*newly added for the 2021-2022 school year!

School and system leaders new to their role within the last five years are welcome to register for the ATA's foremost conference in educational leadership.



For event information and to register visit www.teachers.ab.ca and click on My ATA > Professional Development > Conferences and Events > Leadership Essentials for School Leaders.

COOR-70w 2021-07



#### Planning a leave of absence?

Make sure your e-mail is up to date!

Effective December 2021, requests for payment will now be sent via e-mail, not letter.

Make sure you maintain your membership status in good standing, by paying your leave of absence fees when you take a leave. The Association invoices teachers on leave twice a year (in September and February).



**To update your membership profile,** visit www .teachers.ab.ca and click on Update your Profile.



For more information on leaves of absence, visit www.teachers.ab.ca and click on My ATA > Pay and Benefits > Leaves of Absence.





The ATA News is available in a digital format.

For the lastest issue, visit <u>www.teachers.ab.ca</u> > News and Info > ATA News. Subscribe to receive an email when a new issue is available.



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## SCHOOL LEADERS SPEAKER SERIES





#### 2021-OCTOBER 5 2022-JANUARY 13, MARCH 16 AND MAY 2

The Alberta Teachers' Association **School Leaders** Speaker Series provides a virtual opportunity for school leaders and aspiring leaders to learn from popular keynote speakers in the areas of leadership development and planning, embodying visionary leadership, fostering effective relationships, and developing leadership capacity.





-185a 2021-07

Register for each event using the QR code above or the following link https://zoom. us/meeting/register/tJclcO-rqT4qGN3fzA7z8awO-wpapO3POVnS.



#### The ATA Educational Trust

#### Supporting teachers' professional learning

This year, the ATA Educational Trust will award over \$90,000 for

- \$600 grants to help teachers with attending a conference, workshop, seminar, institute or
- \$500 grants to help teachers attend an ATA specialist council conference or event. The names are chosen in a draw.

Grant application deadline: September 30

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





#### You Teach to Make a Difference. So Do We.

The Post-Graduate Certificate in Special Education for Alberta **Teachers** delivers the in-depth theory and practice you need to ensure positive learning experiences for students with Special Education needs. Consisting of 3 core courses and 2 electives **offered fully online**, the certificate covers Special Education policies and practices in Alberta, as well as the cognitive, academic, and social-emotional implications of various learning needs. Through collaboration, discussion, and instructor engagement, you will be given the tools and resources required to lead successful delivery of Special Education. The Post-Graduate Certificate in Special Education also grants you advanced standing in our Post-Graduate Diploma, and Professional Masters of Education.



**Coming Fall 2021** 



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September 21, 2021 Volume 56, Number 2

## Welcome to the profession

With the ATA's Beginning
Teachers' Conference taking
place on Sept. 24 and 25, we
asked experienced teachers to
share their wisdom in the form
of a haiku. Those published here
are a mere sampling; many more
brilliant creations are available
on the ATA's Facebook page.

Plan your lessons well Build relationships with kids Also, you need sleep!

- Jen Fran



**Beginning Teachers' Conference** is an annual event that is open to teachers in their first two years of classroom teaching and those who are new to teaching in Alberta. If you'd like to post a message for beginning teachers on social media, the hashtag is #BTC2021.

