

Let's get political

Teachers share their views on political engagement.

[Pages 6 and 7.](#)

See inside for the

2023 Resolutions Bulletin

ATA NEWS

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News Publication of The Alberta Teachers' Association

Who's your president?



Jason Schilling

ATA 2023 PEC election

Voting closes March 16 for the Provincial Executive Council election. Results will be posted on social media and the ATA website the morning of Friday, March 17. Visit teachers.ab.ca and click on "PEC Election results" in Quick Links.



Jenny Regal



Health and education

Our public institutions are a blessing that we need to defend.

Read Jonathan Teghtmeyer's editorial on [page 2](#).



Pitfalls and Precautions

Teachers must provide a safe learning environment.

See story on [page 9](#).



'Election year budget'

Funding increases not enough to offset years of erosion, says ATA president.

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After the Last Bell

Reflections of a Grade 4/5 teacher.

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Public health care a profound blessing for Albertans



EDITORIAL

Jonathan Teghtmeyer
ATA News Editor-in-Chief

It's not that I thought I was about to die, but facing a cancer diagnosis provokes many thoughts about death and also about the really important things in life.

This new perspective on life is a blessing of my journey through cancer, one lesson of many that cancer provided. Allow me to tell you a bit about this journey and another important blessing.

At my regular dental check-up last April, my dental hygienist saw some white spots on the side of my tongue and invited the dentist to look at it.

"It's probably nothing," they said, "but let's have it checked out." As it happens, the dentist had viewed a photo of tongue cancer on Instagram earlier that morning. She rightfully sensed that this might not be nothing.

In June, just days before my 43rd birthday, I was diagnosed with squamous cell carcinoma on my tongue. As I was

awaiting the results of my PET-CT scan to determine whether the cancer had spread, and as fear of the unknown consumed much of my thoughts, I came to another important realization and blessing: I am in good hands. By the end of summer, I would go through a 14-hour surgery to have the cancer removed and my tongue reconstructed.

Now, almost a year after the discovery, having gone through this journey, including a 10-day stay in hospital, I can say unequivocally that we are blessed with a truly outstanding public health-care system.

The quality of care, compassion and professionalism that patients receive day-in and day-out is simply remarkable. I received exceptional care. I can say that, without exception, I was treated by a large, diverse team of caring, compassionate and skillful professionals.

But I also saw a group of professionals that was propping up a strained system. I saw health-care workers picking up extra shifts and endless overtime to keep the ship afloat. I noticed — and this does not take away from the exceptional care I received — that there was no shortage of complex, competing demands on their time and attention. I

noticed that understaffing took a toll that often appeared as added burden and fatigue on staff.

We are blessed to have an amazing health-care system, but I know that extended delays in access to care and an over-reliance on the sacrifices of health-care workers are critical issues that keep the system teetering on the brink of collapse. The day before I was discharged, I found some quiet time to talk to one of my nurses about her experience. I was dismayed, but sadly not surprised, that she confirmed my observations of the systemic issues facing health care. She told me about the high numbers of nursing colleagues who had left the profession or the province because they felt it just wasn't worth it anymore due to the systemic issues and lack of support.

Sound familiar?

As a result of the pandemic, I think crisis-level issues in health care have accelerated, but teachers' concerns are trucking rapidly down the same highway. We have the lowest funded education system in the country, and we have a workforce that is three-quarters the size of the national average.

I see two systems in crisis propped up by the exceptional efforts of workers.

But this is not sustainable, and allowing these systems to teeter on the brink of collapse is completely irresponsible.

I believe that it is powerfully important to advocate for both systems. The advocacy of teachers in support of public health care and the advocacy of health-care workers in support of public education is profound. Doing so removes cynical perceptions of self-interest.

We have something really special in our public health-care system. We have something that deserves our attention and support. We, as citizens, need to make sure that we work diligently to support workers and to defend Medicare against those who will attack it.

I am blessed to have received the benefit of it. I am blessed to be able to see it. I am blessed for having received the call to action to protect it.

There's one more blessing. I am blessed to have received love, support and warm messages from many of you as I went through this. For that I am forever grateful. Thank you. It is good to be back. ■

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

Has your board mandated resources? You have options



Q & A

Dennis Theobald
ATA Executive Secretary

Question: I am very concerned about a resource that my board has purchased for use in the subject I'm teaching. I believe it is biased and fails to present an accurate or up to date perspective. What are my options?

Answer: Teachers are expected to use their professional judgment and knowledge to select appropriate methods of teaching that best meet the needs of their students in accordance with the *Teaching Quality Standard*.

As professionals, teachers are afforded considerable latitude to determine what resources they will use as they teach the objectives set out in the program of studies and, in many enlightened school districts, decisions around which authorized resources will be selected for use are made collaboratively with the active participation of the teachers affected. While specific teaching and learning resources may be authorized by the minister of education under section 18(1) of the *Education Act*, and subsequently selected for us by the school district, the use of these authorized resources is not mandated, at least not by Alberta Education. Teachers may choose alternative

materials to supplement or replace, in whole or in part, those resources that have been specifically authorized by Alberta Education.

However, an issue might still arise if a teacher wishes to use learning resources other than those selected for use by their school or jurisdiction. In most cases, no objections will be raised, particularly if the alternative resources are reputable and there are no additional costs associated with their deployment. Occasionally though, an employer may require that teachers use a specific resource, particularly if the objective is to encourage common instructional approaches or perspectives. Even then, the individual teacher would typically retain considerable latitude to select, contextualize and supplement the resource.

The situation becomes more problematic if a person in a position of authority over a teacher (typically a school-based or central office administrator) is not just mandating the use of a resource but also directing how the resource is to be used — effectively telling the teacher how they must teach. It may help to engage in an informal professional conversation with the administrator to set out the basis of the teacher's instructional intentions and, also, to clarify what is actually being required; specifically, is the "requirement" in the nature of a "helpful suggestion" from a professional colleague or an actual directive of the employer?

Should it not be possible to arrive at an acceptable understanding, the teacher may be moved to protest the directive of their employer, including a directive to employ the use of a specific teaching resource. In such instances, the teacher should first consult with the Association's Teacher Employment Services for advice before proceeding.

It is important to remember that there is a difference between questioning a legal directive of a board and defying one. A Teacher Employment Services' staff officer can help navigate the various contextual variables that may be at play. The situation can become particularly complicated if it involves teaching "controversial issues" as defined in Alberta Education policy or triggers Section 58.1 of the *Education Act*, requiring schools to provide parents with notice where courses of study, educational programs or instructional materials, or instruction or exercises, include subject matter that deals primarily and explicitly with religion or human sexuality, and make provision for exempting students upon written request by a parent.

Typically, the first step is to raise concerns with a member of the school leadership team. This can be in the form of a more formal meeting or in writing. The teacher should be prepared to seek understanding of the directive and to clarify their own concerns regarding the directed resource.

If a teacher wishes to pursue the matter further, they may wish to inform

the principal that they intend to lodge a more formal protest to the school division office, generally a curriculum co-ordinator, a deputy superintendent or superintendent. Again, a Teacher Employment Services' staff officer can help the teacher understand and balance their rights as a professional with the fiduciary obligations they owe to their employer. A staff officer will advise how to lodge a protest in a professional and respectful manner that will be most advantageous to a teacher's cause.

A local may also wish to pursue the matter on behalf of its members through discussion at a teacher/board advisory committee meeting or through other forums. These meetings can create useful dialogue around issues that are of general concern to a local's members.

The Association can help teachers access resources relevant to various curricula and topics of relevance to today's classrooms. Staff officers in the Professional Development program area, specialist councils, and Association publications can also be of benefit in conversations involving pedagogy and teaching resources. Providing alternative suggestions to a directed resource may help pave the way to resolution.

Teacher Employment Services' staff officers are experienced in assisting members in crafting language that raises concerns appropriately but does not put the member at risk. Reach out — we are here to help. ■



YOUR VIEWS

ON TWITTER

On International Women's Day

ATA Local #3 @atalocal3

~75% of us @atalocal3 are women. An equal world is an enabled world. How will you help forge a gender-equal world? Celebrate women's achievements. Raise awareness against bias. Take action for equality.

Calgary Teachers @ATA38

Happy International Women's Day! The first IWD was celebrated 112 years ago. We have come a long way since then, but still have far to go. Be proud of the journey that brought you here and keep moving forward. Ever onward.

Black Gold School Division @BlackGldSchools

Today is #InternationalWomensDay! To celebrate, we're excited to highlight the incredible women in leadership positions throughout #BGSD who are helping to create a welcoming, inclusive and equitable future for our students! #inspiresuccess #IWD2023

Grande Prairie Public School Division @GPPSD2357

March 8th is International Women's Day, and Canada's theme this year is Every Woman Counts. Let's celebrate the successful women around us, reminding today's youth and girls that their dream is within reach.

Sturgeon Public Schools @SturgeonSchools

Here's to the women of Sturgeon Public Schools who inspire, educate,

and empower our future leaders each and every day. Happy International Women's Day! Thank you for making our schools a great place to learn.

UN News @UN_News_Centre

Transformation of our societies for a better world can't happen without first empowering women and girls, @UNHighRep Rabab Fatima said as #LDC5 marked #InternationalWomensDay2023 spotlighting women and girls in science & technology.

CTF/FCE @CTFFCE

Teachers, celebrate #IWD2023 and help foster a gender equal world. Explore @WAGE_FEGC's toolkit for resources to engage students, spark a conversation and lead classroom activities.

ASEBP @ASEBP

We join all of our employers in celebrating #InternationalWomensDay and thanking women throughout the education sector for everything they do!

On the provincial budget

Allison McCaffrey-president, ATA Local 55 @allimc456

We wear #RedforEdAb to ask for sustainable and fully funded public education. Great to have received funding this week from the UCP but why did they refuse to fund for three years? Could it be we're less than 100 days from an election?

FOR THE RECORD

“ We need policies that bolster public education as a public good for all instead of expanding exclusionary and undemocratic entities like charter schools. ”

- Wing Li of Support Our Students Alberta in an op-ed piece published by Postmedia

With substitute teachers' appreciation week...



CURATOLO
curatolcartoons.com

Letters to the editor: We welcome letters to the editor. Please limit your submission to 300 words. Only letters bearing a first and last name, address and daytime telephone number will be considered for publication. Teachers are also asked to indicate where and what they teach. All letters are subject to editing for length, clarity, punctuation, spelling and grammar. Email managing editor Cory Hare: cory.hare@ata.ab.ca.

Governments must listen to teachers and nurses

VIEWPOINTS



Heather Smith, United Nurses of Alberta and Linda Silas, Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions

A dire shortage of nurses is being felt nationwide. The crisis in Alberta began years ago but has been made worse by the global pandemic and our governments' responses to it. While it feels like no one has been listening, front-line nurses want Albertans to know we have been offering solutions and are eager to collaborate with all levels of government to fix this crisis.

The Alberta government is focused on reorganizing Alberta Health Services, privatizing public health care services, and planning unneeded "health spending accounts" to pave the way to user fees and co-pays. Until only recently, Ottawa and the provinces had been unable to reach an agreement on national health-care funding because the provinces demand there be no requirements or accountability attached to federal funds.

In the meantime, dozens of hospitals and health centres throughout Alberta have faced temporary closures because of continuing capacity issues, staffing shortages and high patient volumes.

Nurses deserve safe workplaces and patients deserve access to the care they

need. All levels of government must step up and work together. Nurses want Albertans to know that what we want is simple: we want patients to receive the care they need, and for nurses to practice their profession under safe and sustainable working conditions. To do that, we need our governments to start listening to us.

These are messages that we know are familiar to teachers, too. Our struggles and challenges are not dissimilar and our ability to achieve necessary changes is improved when we work together and support each other.

“ Our struggles and challenges are not dissimilar and our ability to achieve necessary changes is improved when we work together and support each other. ”

Governments must do three things to fix the nursing shortage crisis: keep experienced nurses in their jobs, attract nurses back to the workforce and recruit nurses where they are needed most. We need proven programs, backed by firm timelines and real accountability.

Instead, we have nurses who are being bombarded with text messages and phone calls from their staffing departments asking them to fill shifts. Nurses are constantly working on teams that are short three or more nurses, and it is impossible to cover that workload. As a result, patients who need care simply are not getting it.

The Government of Alberta could reduce workloads by implementing safe nurse-to-patient ratios and making further targeted investments in retention initiatives. The federal government should also make direct

investments to support nurses returning to work and recruitment initiatives. But Ottawa and the provinces must work together to improve local and regional health workforce planning and capacity building.

We need these solutions to help bring nurses and early retirees back to the public sector, to reduce Alberta's reliance on expensive private agencies and ensure surge needs are still met across the country. We also need to expand domestic nursing education programs and target recruitment to diversify the nursing workforce. Alberta should scale up student nurse programs to support new nursing graduates in securing employment in attractive full-time jobs.

A failure to implement these solutions will contribute to further declines in Alberta's nursing workforce, and even more difficult working conditions in our hospitals and facilities. Albertans deserve better from their healthcare system. Alberta's nurses have real solutions. Our governments need to listen to them. ■

Heather Smith is president of United Nurses of Alberta, which represents more than 30,000 registered nurses, registered psychiatric nurses and allied health-care professionals.

Linda Silas is president of the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions.



CTF/FCE CORNER

f CTF-FCE @CanTeachersFed www.ctf-fce.ca

Differences need not divide us

Teachers' convention is a very busy time for a lot of people, especially our colleagues who organize these events on our behalf. I am always very grateful to these teacher volunteers, as I know it's not always as easy and smooth as it may appear to be. Convention is also a time for our profession to demonstrate its commitment to learning. I have always been able to leave convention with a new idea that I could use in my classroom or with a deep thought that has me thinking about education in a broader context.

This year's convention season was no different. Though I am not actively teaching right now, I have added a few more titles of books to my ever-increasing reading pile. I also was really struck by the words of Peter Mansbridge at the Calgary City Teachers' Convention. Mansbridge has seen a lot of things and reported on many of the world's biggest news stories. He spoke passionately about how the truth matters. In fact, he said it's all that matters. He went on to speak about the loss of trust in our society and how misinformation has created a problem for the institutions that make up the very fabric of our society — government, health care and

education. He also highlighted how artificial intelligence and ChatGPT has the potential to further erode trust since it will become increasingly more difficult to differentiate between fact and fiction. So how do we combat this lack of trust?

There is a way back, according to Mansbridge, and it's through transparency, talking about facts and, as he noted to a room full of teachers and school leaders, it's through us and the lessons we teach in school. However, we need to choose to work together.

Like Mansbridge, I have also noticed an increased polarization in our society on pretty much everything. Every issue seems to be black or white, no shades of grey, no nuanced conversation or room for discussion. This polarization has crept into every part of our lives, including education and our Association. It's important for us as colleagues to combat the polarization we see within our profession, to listen to each other, to discuss our concerns, to normalize empathy, and work together united on the challenges we see in public education. We need to be mindful that we don't build walls between ourselves as we work toward making education a priority in the upcoming election. ■

National pilot project aims to improve educator mental health

Ottawa – The Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF/FCE) is proud to announce that its new project focused on improving the mental health of teachers and education workers is set to launch after receiving funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada.

With project partners at the University of Ottawa and other experts in mental health, the project, Educator Well-Being during Pandemic Recovery: Supporting the Mental Health of Teachers and Education Workers, aims to promote mental health and well-being and to prevent mental illness among K-12 public education workers by increasing the capacity of the whole school staff. The Canadian government has committed a total of \$798,500 over the next year to support this pilot project.

"After two years of pandemic disruptions throughout Canada's publicly funded public education systems, the mental health of teachers and educators is in dire need of proper care and attention," said Sam Hammond, CTF/FCE President. "Through the federal government's funding, this project is a step in the right direction to ensure teachers and educators have the necessary tools

to address mental illness and trauma through the next phases of pandemic recovery."

The project follows the CTF/FCE's long-standing focus on student and teacher mental health, including significant research documenting the effects of the pandemic on teachers and education workers' mental health and well-being. The objective of this project is to take a systemic approach to supporting mental health and well-being and to develop a collegial model for mental health support. The project evaluation will inform how best to scale up the model to more schools across the country.

"Educators are on the frontline and often see the direct impact that the pandemic has on not only their students, but also on their colleagues, friends and family," said The Honourable Carolyn Bennett, mental health and addictions minister, and associate minister of health.

In collaboration with CTF/FCE member organizations, the project will be implemented and tested in three pilot school sites across Canada, including one French-language school. The pilots are expected to begin in September 2023 and continue until January 2024. ■



PUBLIC EDUCATION IS UNDER THREAT

Reckless changes are putting our children and their futures at risk.

- ▶ Cuts to Vital Supports and Resources
- ▶ Preferential Treatment for Private and Charter Schools

Parents and teachers are fighting back. Join us.

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STAND FOR EDUCATION



Government posts 'election-year budget'

Jonathan Teghtmeyer
ATA News Editor-in-Chief

It's an election-year budget that barely begins to fix the chronic problems created by years of underfunding.

That's the description ATA president Jason Schilling gave for Budget 2023, which has been touted by the province as an historic education investment.

The education budget increases operational spending by \$433 million through a six per cent increase to base instructional grants. It also shows increases to fund enrolment growth of 3.5 per cent in the current school year and an anticipated increase of 2.5 per cent for next school year.

Schilling says the increases are significant and welcome, but he is concerned that students have to wait for election years to see their education supported appropriately.

"Our students should always be able to expect appropriate funding independent of political and economic cycles," he said. "It's sad that schools have to wait for an election year, when oil prices are high, to get the funding they need."

Education Minister Adriana LaGrange says that school authorities deserve a government that will support them in addressing issues like enrolment growth, complex learning needs and transportation affordability.

"This investment addresses rising enrolment, helps meet students' diverse needs and helps school authorities combat inflation," said LaGrange in a budget-day news release.

Budget documents outline a projected \$1.8 billion increase in operational funding over the next three years, which would result in the hiring of 3,000 educational staff over that time period.

"By investing in our education system, we are ensuring students are prepared for success throughout their lives," said Finance Minister Travis Toews. "While inflation continues to be a challenge, we are providing stable, predictable funding so school authorities can hire the staff they need to help students learn."

Systemic issues

Prior to budget day, the Alberta Teachers' Association released graphs from new Statistics Canada data that showed that Alberta spent \$1,767 per student less than the national average in 2019/20, resulting in the lowest rate of funding in the country. The documentation also showed that Alberta has the highest student-to-educator ratio with an education workforce that was just three-quarters the size of the national average.

"The budget will not be able to address the systemic issues plaguing schools," said Schilling. "We are a long way behind after years of rapid population growth and chronic underfunding. We would need \$1.2 billion just to catch us up to the national average in funding from three years ago."

For its part, the NDP says that Budget 2023 continues to underfund Alberta schools, with the province maintaining the lowest funding per student in Canada.

"Alberta is now 3,600 teachers short



JONATHAN TEGHTMEYER

ATA president Jason Schilling addresses media following the release of Budget 2023 at the Alberta legislature on Feb. 28.

of what is needed," said Education Critic Sarah Hoffman in a letter to parents after budget day. "Children who need more opportunities for individual attention still won't get it."

Other significant changes in Budget 2023 include

- a 10 per cent rate increase to specialized learning supports, program unit funding (PUF), English as an additional language (EAL) and First Nations, Metis and Inuit (FNMI) funding envelopes;
- a new \$42 million per year fund for addressing classroom complexity;
- a five per cent increase to operations and maintenance funding; and

- a \$93 million boost to school transportation funding.

Student transportation will now fund busing for students attending private, charter and alternative schools, while also decreasing the funded distance for students from 2.4 to one kilometre. Government documents suggest the number of students funded for transportation will increase by 80,000 as a result of these changes.

The budget also sets aside \$40 million for student well-being and \$47 million for curriculum implementation, although officials are keeping mum about which grades and subjects are set to be implemented in the next school year.

The government's capital budget includes \$2.3 billion to fund 58 new school and school modernization projects over the next three years. The day after the budget, LaGrange announced 13 new projects that would be fully funded and others that would receive design or planning funding. Included in the budget, though, is \$171 million to support more charter school infrastructure and \$43 million to fund so-called collegiate schools, which also operate outside of the public education system.

The budget is expected to be passed before the legislature lets out at the end of March. Election day is May 29. ■

Alberta ranks last in Canada for spending on public education.

Alberta would need to add **\$1.2 billion** in K-12 education funding to bring spending up to the national average.

Per-pupil school board operating expenditures, by province (2019/20)



Source: Statistics Canada tables 37-10-0065 and 37-10-0109
*Excluding the three territories



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.

Let's get political

Water cooler talk with politically active teachers

Cory Hare
ATA News Managing Editor

A desire to contribute and a willingness to step up. Those are the key traits that politically active teachers say are crucial to their involvement in politics, whether it be behind the scenes or as election candidates.

With a provincial election looming in May, the *ATA News* spoke to four teachers who've experienced politics as a candidate or as volunteers behind the scenes. Here are their stories.

Ariana Mancini

Fort McMurray Local No. 48

Ariana Mancini is a Fort McMurray teacher who ran for MLA in the 2015 election and again in a 2022 byelection.

Although she had no prior experience in politics, Mancini was motivated to run in 2015 because, in the lead-up to the election, she felt that public education and health care weren't getting the attention or respect they deserved.

"I decided to run in order to talk about public services that I think are important and to have those views represented in the election," she says.

Running under the NDP banner, she knew that she was a long-shot to win in the strongly conservative riding, but she earned 31 per cent of the vote, finishing second to Brian Jean of the Wildrose Party, who garnered 44 per cent support.

"Far too often we think someone smarter, someone more poised, someone more respected in the community is going to come along and talk about the things that we want to talk about," she says. "If

I learned anything it's that you are the right person for the job."

Mancini ran again in a 2022 byelection, this time placing a distance second to Jean. During that campaign, she sensed that residents were more rooted in their views and less open to hearing other perspectives and discussing ideas.

"The first time that I ran, I found that there was more willingness among people to listen to what you had to say before forming an opinion, to listen to your take on a certain issue," she says. "I feel that, now, just the name of the party tells people everything they need to know before they actually get to know what that party's platform is and who their candidate is."

Based on her experience, she encourages anyone with an interest to get involved.

"If you have that little voice inside of you saying you should do something, you should definitely listen to it."

Neil Korotash

Greater St. Albert Catholic Teachers' Local No. 23

Neil Korotash was first elected to St. Albert city council when he was a 19-year-old university student. He was motivated to run after having some exposure to the machinations of city hall through the city's youth council and other agencies.

"I thought I had something of value to offer ... that I could probably bring something a little different to the table," he says.

His two terms spanned the completion of his education degree and his first few years as a beginning teacher with Greater St. Albert Catholic Schools.

"It was just so rewarding to be able to contribute to the community that I've lived in my whole life," he says.

Throughout the decades that have since passed,

Korotash continued to be involved in politics in his community by door knocking for candidates, helping with campaigns, seeking donations, recruiting volunteers and delivering brochures.

He ran for the PC nomination in preparation for the 2015 provincial election and was the Alberta Party candidate in 2019. He's also served as president of a local constituency association.

"I like to be involved and stay in touch," he says.

Korotash says that his days of running for office are behind him, but it's just his nature to engage in political debate, which he does online.

"I think it's an important part of a functioning democracy that you're able to debate ideas and have conversations and those conversations, in large part, take place online these days," he says. "If we can't have conversations and share our perspectives, then what kind of democracy are we living in?"

With politics becoming more polarized and vitriolic, especially at the provincial and federal levels, Korotash says he's not sure how to encourage more involvement from teachers or other civic-minded citizens.

"I wish I knew because those are the people we need," he says. "We need people that are moderate, level-headed and not just looking out for their team, but for the community."

Michael Robertson

Three Drums of Wheat Local No. 20

For Michael Robertson, political engagement is simply a way of life. When he was growing up, the expectation in his household was that adults were able to discuss difficult issues like politics and world affairs while maintaining a sense of humour about it.

Robertson says he thrives on political discussion, exchanging ideas and even disagreement. He's been

What does political engagement mean to

Responses gathered at the ATA's Political Engagement Seminar on March 4



Political affairs columnist Graham Thomson addresses attendees of the ATA's Political Engagement Seminar on Mar. 4.



Madison Dovell
Livingston Range Local No. 14

Being politically engaged to me means caring about the current and also the future of Alberta and Canada in general. It means really figuring out who the people are who are going to be making the decisions and even potentially stepping out of our own comfort zones to engage in deeper ways like offering up your ideas, offering up your service, helping in campaigns, reaching out to friends, talking to families, having those hard conversations. I think it's important to be politically engaged because the future is important, the children matter, Alberta matters and we can't just let it flow by us without any input.



Karlee Hren
Edmonton Public Local No. 37

Not all of our members, not all teachers have the capacity to be politically engaged and for those who have the capacity, we have the responsibility to support our colleagues and ourselves in that action. It also benefits society as a whole, us being politically aware and advocating for the needs of the community that we serve and public education.



Ariana Mancini
Fort McMurray Local No. 48



Neil Korotash
Greater St. Albert Catholic Teachers'
Local No. 23



Michael Robertson
Three Drums of Wheat Local No. 20



Kari Whan
Northern Lights Local No. 15

involved behind the scenes with various parties and in various capacities throughout his adult life, most recently as VP of policy for his local UCP constituency association.

"I've always felt a pressing need to make a difference in the world, an actual difference that affects actual people," he says. "Too many people in our country and our province complain about the situation that we're in and then do nothing about it."

While the theatrical side of politics can be demoralizing, Robertson sees promise in the way politics happens when the cameras are off.

"So many people who do politics are partisan ... but when you get them in a room behind closed doors, they will admit that things are much more nuanced, much more complicated and that's where the real work is done. That's where the real people are and opponents can come together and work through their problems if they see each other as human beings."

While modern-day politics are associated with polarization and partisanship, Robertson senses that people themselves are not that divided.

"Most of us don't disagree as much as we think we do. We think we're super polarized but that's just political parties manipulating us for votes," he says.

He understands why some people are turned off by political theatre but suggests that local involvement is the key to making a difference.

"The only way for us to have a truly democratic society ... is for us to be involved as much as we are able," he says. "More important than being 'politically involved,' as people envision it, is being locally involved ... helping people to make their lives better, because when you do that, you make the world a better place. If all of us did that all the time, there would be very few problems and we could probably resolve them quickly."

Kari Whan

Northern Lights Local No. 15

Kari Whan is a Cold Lake teacher who ran for the NDP in the 2019 election because no one was talking about the issues she felt were most important.

"Rather than just listening to what was going on, I really felt a need to ensure that things like health care, education, support for vulnerable people were really a priority for government," she said. "I've always been very vocal about my opinions and where I stand politically."

She kept her teaching job rather than take a leave in

order to run for MLA. With few volunteers besides her husband, setting up a constituency, attending events and knocking on doors was like a second full-time job, consuming every evening and weekend.

"It was a lot of fun to meet different people in the community, talk to some of the things I thought were concerns, listen to what their concerns were," she said.

Flying the NDP banner in a UCP stronghold had its moments. She received death threats, people walking by her home and yelling at her, and someone posted a nasty video that warranted a call to police.

"There was a lot of negativity involved ... but there was also a lot of support. A lot of people came out of the woodwork," she says. "There were also a lot of people that I wouldn't have guessed thought the same way that I do."

The best part of her experience was connecting with people and talking about issues.

"Just engaging with people was the most pleasurable time," she says.

Her advice to anyone who's considering getting involved either as a candidate or as a volunteer is to go for it.

"I would definitely encourage anyone who's interested." ■

you and why do you think it's important?



MJ Eagleson
Calgary Public
Teachers Local No. 38

If our students and ourselves are politically engaged, then we understand what the implications of [government] policies can be long term. It also allows for the building of communities because we're able to understand one another when we can be engaged in the civics that is going on around us. Some of that gets lost when we head towards polarization. What it personally means to me is that I hold a lot of privilege and power in order to empower others around me, be it my colleagues, or be it administration or be it my students, my family, even within my communities, and it's so important because we are the ones that can change the outcomes within our systems.



Dave Krawchuk
Edmonton Public
Teachers Local No. 37

The fights we're engaged in are incredibly important, not just for today but for tomorrow. I fight for my own children, but I also fight for the children of the future. I'm the kind of person that, if I'm going to ask people to do something, I'm going to do it first. I'm going to make sure I'm involved before I start asking other people to become involved as well, so that's why I get involved in the way that I do.



Stéfane Kreiner
Association des
enseignantes et des enseignants
francophones de l'Alberta No. 24

Pour moi, l'engagement politique c'est de participer aux processus démocratiques. Ça veut dire savoir ce qui se passe dans les événements quotidiens dans notre société, connaître les opinions des gens autour de moi et des gens dans la société [élargie], faire voir les valeurs dans ce que je vois autour de moi dans les nouvelles, et promouvoir mes perspectives, mes opinions auprès des personnes autour de moi pour [en faire] une priorité pour eux aussi.

Pour moi, c'est important d'être impliqué, engagé dans la politique parce que nous vivons les conséquences de notre action ou de notre inaction tous les jours.



Shannon Dube
Fort McMurray
Local No. 48

Being informed, most of all. It means that you are paying attention and that you are taking an active part in what's going on around you. Everyone's voice and vote make a difference and the more that you recognize your own agency, the more that you will feel that you have the power to make a difference and to create change in those around you and in the context that you work in or are living in. ■

Summaries and photos: Elissa Corsi



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The Alberta Teachers' Association

The Alberta Teachers' Association invites applications for the position of

EXECUTIVE STAFF OFFICER, TEACHER EMPLOYMENT SERVICES (SARO)

Competition: ESO1/23

Location: Calgary

Position Overview

This position will assist in the work of the Teacher Employment Services (TES) program area, supporting both teacher employment and collective bargaining functions. Duties may include the following:

- Being responsible for organizing and providing direct service to members as part of the Teacher Employment Services team, including handling teacher employment field service requests, acting as a representative of the bargaining agent in collective agreement negotiations and providing support to Association subgroups
- Advising members on teacher personnel problems, collective agreement entitlements and legal assistance
- Handling collective agreement grievances and board of reference appeals
- Participating and carrying out presentations and workshops for TES conferences
- Serving as Association resource person in specific areas of expertise
- Carrying out special projects from other areas of Association operation as assigned

Qualifications

Candidates must demonstrate:

- Effective communication, including effective writing and presentation skills
- Strong organizational skills, attention to detail and good judgment
- Superior leadership, interpersonal and collaboration skills and political acumen
- Ability to foster effective working relationships with both internal and external stakeholders
- Awareness of where to find and apply relevant legislation, policy and the *Education Act*; and
- Appreciation of the strategic context of collective bargaining

In addition, the following are required:

- A valid teaching certificate and a minimum of five years of successful teaching experience in public education
- Proven commitment to public education
- Ability to undertake travel and evening/weekend work

A demonstrated commitment to the Alberta Teachers' Association (or other Canadian teachers' organization), course work in employee and labour relations, experience in and/or knowledge of pensions and benefits are considered assets. The Association is committed to reconciliation and a candidate's knowledge and experience of related issues and/or membership in an Indigenous community is considered an asset.

Who We Are

As a professional organization and the voice of the province's teachers, the Association is dedicated to advancing the cause of education and to building the teaching profession in Alberta. The Association represents all public, separate and francophone school teachers in the province of Alberta.

The provincial Association, its locals and subgroups perform both union and professional functions. As a union, the Association negotiates and monitors collective agreements and represents teachers in matters of employment. Effective January 1, 2023, the Association has begun representing members who may be subject to regulatory processes relating to professional conduct and practice administered by the Alberta Teaching Profession Commission.

In its professional role, the Association promotes and supports the preparation of candidates to the profession, provides ongoing professional development to members, makes representation to the government on matters of education policy, advocates for public education, and works with like-minded organizations provincially, nationally and internationally. To better achieve these ends, the Association actively promotes the representation and participation of member teachers in its governance and the delivery of its programs.

What This Position Offers

Total compensation for this position includes a starting salary of \$138,720, pensionable service under the Teachers' Pension Plan of the Alberta Teachers' Retirement Fund Board and employer-paid benefits as stipulated in a collective agreement. The initial location will be in Calgary, but future assignments may be to any present or future Association office. Duties will commence on June 1, 2023 (negotiable).

Applicants should quote position ESO1/23 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, March 29, 2023 and should be addressed to

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

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

Safety is a teacher's obligation



PITFALLS & PRECAUTIONS

Chris Gibbon
ATA Staff Officer

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.

Classroom management in an academic class is tough on any day, but it can be even tougher in a career and technology studies lab where you may have many students working at multiple stations. In a recent decision of the hearing committee of the professional conduct committee, a CTS teacher was found guilty of unprofessional conduct for having unsafe ventilation in their lab whilst running a motor vehicle. Further to that, the teacher also operated equipment, which was marked out of order, in front of students. Furthermore, the teacher went on to make disparaging comments about a colleague to a student in their lab.

CTS teachers have obligations under multiple pieces of legislation, including the *Education Act* and the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, when working with students in their labs. They must also model safe practices, especially in an environment where there is a considerable risk of serious harm. A large majority of CTS teachers fulfill their obligations to the legislation and have a safe, caring and welcoming environment for students.

In failing to have a safe learning environment, the teacher put students at serious risk by not properly ventilating the lab with a motor vehicle running and also operating tools deemed to be out of order. Parents send their children to school each day expecting a safe learning environment. By failing to meet this obligation, the teacher did not treat the students with respect and dignity and was not considerate of their circumstances.

The fact that the teacher also made disparaging comments about his colleagues to a student is that much more egregious. Those inappropriate comments about his colleague undermined the confidence of pupils in that other teacher. The teacher was levied with both a severe letter of reprimand and a substantial fine. Failure to pay the fine would result in the member being declared ineligible for membership until the fine was paid. Teachers in Alberta must be members of the Association to teach in a public school. ■



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THEATRE ALBERTA

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST
BY OSCAR WILDE

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CALLING ALL MEMBERS

Apply to serve on an ATA committee!

The committees

To assist it in the business of the Association, Provincial Executive Council maintains committees that address topics of concern to teachers and carry out various aspects of the Association's affairs. Each year, a number of practising teachers are selected to serve on Association committees as well as to represent the Association on boards and committees of other organizations and provincial bodies.

The commitment

Committee members attend the committee's meetings, prepared to speak—from their perspective as a field member—to the forces affecting the respective committee's work.

The term for each of these positions begins July 1, 2023. Standing committee positions are generally three years in length. Travel and incidental costs, as well as release time, are covered to enable committee members to attend meetings.

Check out the list of opportunities and application information on the ATA website.

The deadline for applications is April 13.

The ATA embraces diversity and inclusion and is committed to representing members belonging to equity-seeking groups. Members belonging to equity-seeking groups are encouraged to apply.



All applicants are encouraged to reach out to their district representative(s) to better understand the work that Association committees undertake.

If you have any questions, please contact Lindsay Yakimyshyn at lindsay.yakimyshyn@ata.ab.ca, 780-447-9425 or 1-800-232-7208.

COMM-209 2022-12



Did you know...

- We have meeting and banquet space available at Barnett House for corporate and private functions?
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- We provide in-house catering to all types of events?

Please email meetingrooms@ata.ab.ca for more information or to book your event or special occasion.



The Alberta Teachers' Association

Council approves humanitarian aid

PEC POINTS

Audrey Dutka
ATA News Staff

Highlights of the Provincial Executive Council meeting held Feb. 27 and 28, via virtual platform.

1. Approved 147 resolutions arising from the six-year review of policy for presentation to the 2023 Annual Representative Assembly (ARA).

2. Considered 36 Council resolutions, 70 local resolutions and one specialist council resolution for presentation to the 2023 ARA. In the case of local resolutions, approved recommendations of concurrence, amendment and concurrence, nonconcurrence, referral for study and report, or action taken. Council further approved the assignment of speakers to each resolution and approved the reports on resolutions 2-3/22 and 3-22/22, requiring report to the 2023 ARA, be published in the *Resolutions Bulletin* and *ARA Handbook*.

3. Approved the position paper on public education, as amended, be posted on the Association's website.

4. Authorized a contribution of \$10,000 to Education International in support of an application with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada for an at-risk Afghan colleague and their family.

5. Authorized a contribution of \$10,000 to Education International in support of humanitarian efforts in Turkey and Syria following the devastating earthquake that took place on Feb. 6.

6. Authorized financial support, in the amount of \$2,674, to the Association's representative on the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF/FCE) Advisory Committee on the Status of Women to cover the costs to attend the CTF/FCE 2023 Women's Symposium, taking place in Ottawa from May 17 to 19.

7. Authorized up to seven members of Council to attend the CTF/FCE 2023 Women's Symposium in Ottawa.

8. Authorized members of Council at their discretion to attend the Association's Women in Leadership Summit, taking place on March 10 and 11 in Edmonton.

9. Authorized an overexpenditure of \$10,000 to move the Joint Meeting of Local Communications Officers and Local Political Engagement Officers to a venue in Calgary on May 5.

10. Authorized members of Council at their discretion to attend the Joint Meeting of Local Communications Officers and Local Political Engagement Officers, taking place in Calgary on May 5.

11. Approved for circulation to local secretaries six electoral ballots proposing to amend the Association's general bylaws, and delete the discipline bylaw and practice review bylaws, by motions at the 2023 ARA.

12. Approved proposed timelines and appointed Council members to a selection committee for the recruitment of the position of Executive Staff Officer, Teacher Employment Services, SARO.

13. Received the report of a hearing committee that found a teacher guilty of one charge of unprofessional conduct. The hearing committee imposed the penalty of a letter of reprimand and a fine of \$300.

14. Received the report of a hearing committee that found a teacher guilty of three charges of unprofessional conduct. The hearing committee imposed a penalty including specific performance requirements with provision to cancel membership in the Association should the requirements not be met. ■

NOTICES AND EVENTS

Governor General's History Award for Excellence in Teaching

Each year, Canada's History Society recognizes six teachers for innovative approaches to teaching Canadian history. The 2023 recipients will be awarded

- an individual cash prize of \$2,500,
- a \$1,000 cash prize for the recipient's school, and
- a trip for two to Ottawa to receive their award from the governor general of Canada.

If you or a teacher you know has made an impact on students through history, submit a nomination or apply online today! Applications are due April 30. Information is available at www.canadashistory.ca.



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Alberta Advisory Committee for Educational Studies

APPLICATION FOR GRANTS Descriptive or Experimental Studies

Deadline: May 1, 2023, 4:30 PM

Applications will be accepted by e-mail; however, they must be received as a single letterhead-oriented attachment to the e-mail.

The Alberta Advisory Committee for Educational Studies (AACES) invites applications for grants to support descriptive or experimental studies in education.

Grants in excess of \$6,000 are awarded only rarely because of limited available resources. Grants cannot be given for travel unrelated to the proposed research project.

Note: The application to the Ethics Review Committee must be initiated and a copy of the submission to that committee must be included with the proposal.

Online applications and the guidelines for grant applications are available at: [Alberta Teachers' Association > Public Education > Education Research > Alberta Advisory Committee for Educational Studies \(AACES\)](#)

Application forms may be e-mailed to sudeep.dua@ata.ab.ca OR submitted to

Administrator, Alberta Advisory Committee for Educational Studies

c/o The Alberta Teachers' Association
11010 142 Street NW, Edmonton AB T5N 2R1

Telephone 780-447-9432 or 1-800-332-1280

Completed applications received by May 1, 2023, will be considered at the spring meeting of AACES.

DEHR =
GRANTS.

The Alberta Teachers' Association

APPLY FOR A DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS GRANT TODAY

The Alberta Teachers' Association is offering grants of up to \$2,000 to schools for projects that support the Association's vision of a public education system committed to educating all children well in an inclusive setting.

For more information, please contact dehr@ata.ab.ca.

APPLICATION DEADLINE: April 30, 2023

PD-80-38e 2023-03



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Contact our School Liaison at **587-920-9851**

or childrensfestival@stalbert.ca

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Help is available to Association members but timelines are tight.

Please contact us immediately!

professionaldiscipline@ata.ab.ca

780-447-9460



The Alberta Teachers' Association

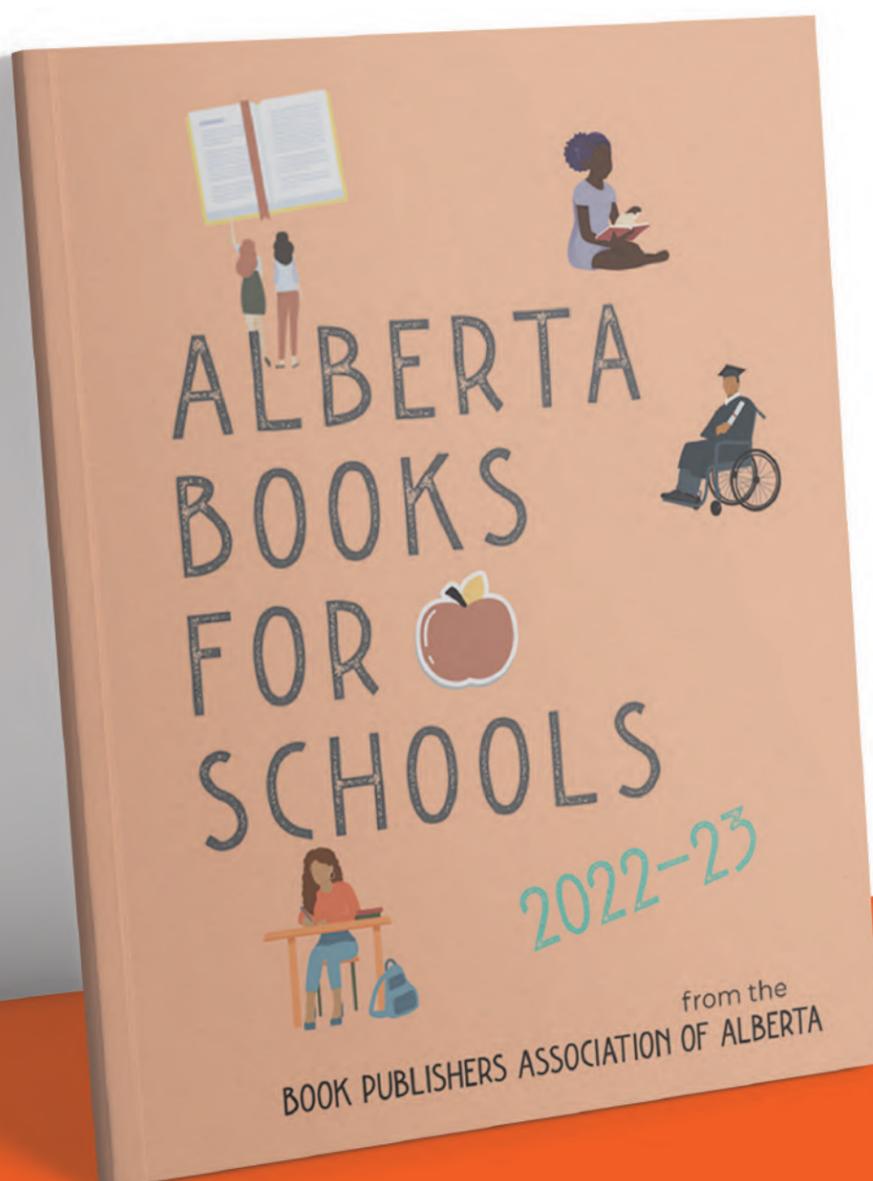


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Monday and Tuesday, May 1-2, 2023

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Blended Conference Format: Attend Online or In Person

The IT Summit will create opportunities to:

- Explore exemplary practices for teaching and learning with technology, including opportunities in distance education.
- Share best practices that support student learning through technology use in schools and school divisions.
- Promote professional learning communities that foster effective teaching and learning with technology.
- Celebrate and support existing partnerships and encourage new partnership opportunities.



To register or for more information visit the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation website at www.stf.sk.ca > Professional Resources > Events Calendar > IT Summit (Conference)



STF-004048 / 20230214

DIGITAL NEWS

The ATA News is available online.

For the latest issue, visit www.teachers.ab.ca/news.
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the Quest for Net-Zero Emissions

Join LearnEnergy's virtual in-class educational opportunities for high school science classes! The "Quest for Net-Zero Emissions" introduces teachers and students to organizations and technologies leading the way.

Dates:
Friday, March 24, 2023 at 2:30PM MT
Thursday, April 6, 2023 at 1:15PM MT

Presenters:
Synergize: uses technology to reduce methane emissions from cattle.
Leading Change Canada: connects young environmental and sustainability leaders.

Presenter:
GHGSAT: uses their own technology and satellites to pinpoint methane emissions around the world.

This is a not-for-profit event and there is no cost.
Contact: kking@learnenergy.net for more information and to request a meeting invitation link.

Watch the "Quest for Net-zero Emissions" pilot video: <https://youtu.be/0yZk-YAshro>



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TALENT

March 14, 2023 | Volume 57, Number 10

After the Last Bell



Andrés Porras Verwaayen is a Grade 4/5 teacher working for Calgary Catholic Schools.

Andrés Porras Verwaayen

2023 gotcha! PHOTO CONTEST

Cash prizes available!



The **ATA News** invites you to get your camera out and start shooting those award-winning photographs.

1st place: \$200 2nd place: \$100 3rd place: \$50

GOTCHA! Contest rules

- 1 Photos taken by active and associate ATA members of education- or school-related activities are eligible. (Hint: photos depicting action are best.)
- 2 Entries must be submitted by the member who took the photos.
- 3 Photos taken between Sept. 1, 2022 and May 15, 2023, are eligible.
- 4 Please email photos to cory.hare@ata.ab.ca. Entries must be received by 5 p.m. on May 15, 2023.
- 5 Each entry must be accompanied by a description of the activity; the names (if possible) of the people in the photo; the date when the photo was taken; and the photographer's name, school and contact information.
- 6 Cash prizes will be awarded to entrants whose photos place in the top three, as follows: first place, \$200; second place, \$100; and third place, \$50.
- 7 Each winner will also receive a certificate of merit, as will those receiving honourable mention.
- 8 Up to 20 additional entries may be selected for an award of honourable mention.
- 9 Each entrant may submit up to five photos but no entrant can win more than one top-three prize.
- 10 A panel of individuals with photography, publishing and teaching experience will judge the entries. The decision of the judges is final.
- 11 Winning photographs will be published in the *ATA News*.
- 12 Photos submitted for the contest may be published in the *ATA News*, the *ATA Magazine* or other Association publications.
- 13 Please read carefully. Failure to comply with any of these rules may result in disqualification.

Get snapping and good luck!