

Teachers form Black advocacy group

See Page 11.

ATA NEWS

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WELCOME BACK!



News

Province sticks with plan for school re-opening

Page 4.



Viewpoints

Governments across Canada not doing enough

Page 3.



Q&A

Students need teachers; teachers need to be in school

Page 2.



Editorial

Challenging year ahead calls for care and compassion

Page 2.

ARA 2020



- 4 PEC reviews outstanding resolutions, tables motion of non-confidence in minister
- 4 You gotta fight ... president delivers ARA message
- 5 School re-entry and racism among delegates' concerns
- 7 Teachers resilient in face of challenges
- 7 Budget passes with \$81 fee increase
- 8-9 Highlighted resolutions
- 16 Tale End: Behind the scenes of the first ever virtual ARA

Anti union

Bill 32 an attempt to silence teachers and other public sector workers.

See story on page 4.

ADLC closure creates ripples

Distance learning to become more challenging for some school districts.

See story on page 7.

Better together

ATA merges Teacher Welfare and Member Services to improve service to members.

See story on page 12.

Challenging year ahead

Above all else, take care of yourselves and each other



EDITORIAL

Jonathan Teghtmeyer
ATA News Editor-in-Chief

The year ahead is going to be a challenge like no other for teachers and our entire public education system. The social and emotional toll that it will take on all of us will be significant. And our ability to endure it will be highly contingent on our ability to support each other.

I recognise that will be difficult at times, and I suspect that many individual relationships will be strained, but I hope that we can appreciate that the source of the strain is something external that affects all of us and is largely out of our control.

Pressure sometimes just needs to find a valve to vent. Be compassionate towards each other as we all face our own challenges associated with the pandemic. And try to be patient with and forgiving of those around you.

I am particularly mindful of our administrator colleagues at this time. As is often the case, principals are caught in the middle of virtually all of the most unpleasant situations that arise in school. While attempting to deal with the regular issues that affect schools, they will now have to manage all of the school-based issues that arise related to COVID.

Unfortunately, it appears our principals will again find themselves without the time and support they require to do this well. The Alberta Teachers' Association is pushing for the government to fund more administrative staff and time, but at the time of writing, it looks like that won't happen. Instead, administrators will do what they always do and make the best of the less-than-ideal situation at hand. Support them, help them and try to be flexible where reasonable and possible.

At the same time, whether we are administrators, classroom teachers or fill some other role, we cannot flex beyond the point of breaking. We have to pay attention to our own well-being and we have to listen when our health

and body are sending us messages. Mind your mind, take breaks if you need them and seek help when it's required. As compassionately as possible, keep an eye on each other too.

And if you are feeling ill, STAY HOME.

For a variety of reasons, teachers have been used to ignoring simple symptoms and enduring teaching while sick. That simply cannot happen this year.

This brings me to substitute teachers. The Association is particularly mindful of our substitute teacher colleagues. Medical, family medical and isolation/quarantine-related leaves among contract staff will create higher than normal demand for substitute coverage. At the same time, the system may not be able to rely as heavily on retired teachers as it has in the past. Some are at an age that makes them more vulnerable to complications and will choose not to be in schools this year.

We need to do better for subs. The Association is recommending placing about 3,500 substitute teachers on full-time casual teaching contracts. This would ensure that subs are available, have

access to their own leaves and benefits, that they have a stable income and predictable work locations. Substitutes on contracts can be assigned to a smaller number of schools to minimize their number of contacts.

And for our classroom teachers, flexibility means that we will need to be prepared to conduct our classes differently and that our schools may need to switch between scenarios quickly with little notice. We should reduce the pressure that we often put on ourselves and focus on the priorities of making sure that students feel safe and well cared for while learning to the best that the circumstances will allow, even if that means learning less or less effectively than normal.

The Association is continuing to press for changes to improve the resources, supports and guidelines that will help keep students, staff and families safer. We will not stop. But even with the best plans, this year will not be ideal.

Take care of yourself and take care of each other. ■

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

Teachers need to be in school



Q & A

Dennis Theobald
ATA Executive Secretary

Question: Why is the Alberta Teachers' Association saying that teachers should return to their schools in September even though we are still in a pandemic?

Answer: I'm writing this, in fits and starts, on my iPad while in the emergency department of the University of Alberta hospital in Edmonton. It's late evening and I've been here about six hours now waiting for my mother to be assessed, treated and admitted.

Over the course of the day, I've had an opportunity to watch hospital staff work together in shifting teams to manage a constant flow of patients, and I've been struck by the calm and normalcy that they are creating in circumstances that one might reasonably expect to be chaotic. For them, it is their work and their responsibility to take care of those who, like my mother, turn up on their doorstep needing help.

Hospital staff, and visitors like me, are screened upon arrival, answering a set of questions about

possible COVID-19 risk and exposure. Everyone is masked, except for some patients, and many doctors, nurses and technicians are wearing face shields or goggles. Some efforts have been taken to limit crowding and control movement, but people are working in close proximity to patients and one another. Staff re-glove and re-gown as they move from patient to patient, and hand sanitizer is being pumped freely. Yet the overall impression being conveyed is "business as usual (with a few adaptations)."

Earlier in the summer, I had a conversation with Dr. Lynora Saxinger, a leading epidemiologist who is advising the chief medical officer of health and who has volunteered her time to work with the Association on issues relating to schooling during the pandemic. Some of you may have met Dr. Saxinger, at least virtually, in one of our very well-attended telephone town halls or at the online conference attended just over a week ago by more than 1,000 of the province's school leaders. Dr. Saxinger spoke to me about how workers in the health-care sector had been initially very fearful about returning to work, believing that doing so would put their health and indeed their lives and those of their loved ones at risk as they dealt with the pandemic. She talked about the measures that were then taken

to improve staff safety and to build confidence noting that, as a result, people working in health care were actually at lower risk of contracting COVID-19 than the general population. In terms of contracting the virus, it turned out that the U of A hospital was about the safest public place you could be (although it's now hour eight and death by boredom is still a distinct possibility).

Let's talk about public education. In March, in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers quickly transitioned to provide emergency remote teaching, demonstrating resilience, resourcefulness and deep personal and professional commitment to supporting their students' learning and well-being. But while it was the best we could do, we know that this mode of instruction does not work for many students and fails those who are particularly at risk in their academic or home lives. Furthermore, the events of the last six months have made it abundantly clear that the public education system plays an essential role in facilitating economic activity, maintaining social norms and order, and protecting and supporting children and families who are facing a wide variety of pressures, threats and challenges. While not directly related to the mission of public education,

these are still important factors that must be accounted for in the formation of public policy around a return to schooling.

Finally, we know from our survey of teachers that, collectively, we want to return to in-person learning. Teachers miss their students and they miss their classrooms.

So our task now is to advocate strongly for measures that will diminish the risk to students, teachers, staff and community as students return to school, and build public and member confidence. To this end, the Association, based on the advice of Dr. Saxinger, has set out seven priorities for enhancing safety and confidence upon the restarting of schools and is providing advice to individual members who may be at particular risk of contracting the virus.

We also pushed hard to delay the start of school until after Labour Day to ensure that teachers, school leaders and staff have sufficient time to work out the myriad details that must be addressed to ensure that school resumes in the safest and most orderly manner possible. Like many of you, I am frustrated that more is not being done to mitigate risks surrounding a return to schooling, particularly around facilitating distancing in junior

Q&A continued on page 5



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Return-to-school plans are ill-advised



VIEWPOINTS

Shelley Morse
President, Canadian Teachers' Federation

The Canadian Teachers' Federation believes in a Canada where every child has equitable access to quality publicly funded public education. We urge all jurisdictions across the country to work together so that schools can reopen and stay open in a way that is safe and sustainable. To do this, we need a long-term strategy that goes beyond September. Rather than rushing to reopen without adequate plans, delaying or staggering students' return to school buildings would allow teachers and staff the time needed to properly prepare classrooms and common spaces.

Instead, the current reopening plans for schools put forward by the provinces and territories throw caution to the wind. For months, teacher organizations have urged governments to listen. Unfortunately, the advice of our profession and our sector has been largely ignored, silencing teachers and leaving us concerned.

Months of effort dedicated to physical distancing, working from home, the creation of outdoor spaces for restaurants and enhanced cleaning protocols all risk being undone by unsafely reopening schools. It is illogical and completely irresponsible to accept that the rules successfully applied in so many places, which are the reason for Canada being in a position where it can reopen, are not being universally applied in public schools.

For public schools to operate safely, national standards on masks and personal protective equipment, physical distancing, clean environments and screening must be followed by all jurisdictions across the country. The only way to

make these requirements possible is to increase staffing — from teachers and support personnel, to custodians and bus drivers — and to also seek out alternate spaces where classes can be held. All of these protective measures require adequate funding, and so far no government in Canada is willing to foot the bill.

“As teachers, we want nothing more than to be back with our students, educating children and youth to the best of our ability in person, face to face, to ensure they receive the best quality publicly funded public education possible.”

But ignoring scientific advice in order to avoid investing in extra space, extra staff and smaller class sizes that would keep children and teachers healthy and safe is a morally wrong and ill-advised economic policy. A safe and sustainable return to school buildings is possible if we are prepared to pay for it.

As with child care, the safe and sustainable reopening of schools

across the country is key to keeping the economy afloat. Investment in public education at this time is more important than ever. Provinces and territories have currently committed slightly more than a billion dollars in additional funding for schools to reopen, which in most cases does not even make up for the cuts of previous years.

Education is also absolutely central to the country's economic recovery: parents, particularly mothers, cannot go back to work if their kids cannot return to school. The Government of Canada's decision to prorogue parliament as schools are reopening across the country is disappointing, especially when the prime minister acknowledged, after the new finance minister was sworn in, "Provincial and territorial leaders have a responsibility to ensure our kids are safe in the classroom," and simultaneously said that, "as the federal government we will do whatever we can to help with that."

As the government works to set its new agenda, we urge the prime minister to include measures that help ensure that our schools safely stay open as we brace for an uncertain fall and winter amid a potential second wave of infections.

As teachers, we want nothing more than to be back with our students, educating children and youth to the best of our ability in person, face to face, to ensure they receive the best quality publicly funded public education possible.

Simply, we are saying that the return to schools needs to be done safely, from September through to June. Anything short of that is doomed to fail and will have repercussions for the entire country.

If schools are to remain safe sanctuaries of learning, 2020-21 could be a school year for all to be proud of. If, however, corners are cut, and the necessary health and safety measures are not in place, the ripple effects of failure will be felt far beyond the classroom. ■

YOUR VIEWS

FACEBOOK FEEDBACK

On school re-entry

Katelynn Anne

It needs to be addressed that MANY classrooms do not have desks and it is not possible to have students not facing one another. In our school, we only have large tables that seat 3-5 students. I feel like they think we all sit in rows. In many classrooms that just isn't possible!

Jason Peters

Class size is the answer we are all looking for. And two masks for the whole year? With constant washing they won't last a month.

Dionne Rognvaldson Anan

K-3 and K-4 schools with classes of 20+ will have challenges with social distancing and this will leave whole schools or at least most of a school population unmasked with no plan!

Jad Abboud

While I am a bit worried about myself, my biggest concern is about my own kids who are in division one. I am able to distance myself from my Grade 9 students to a certain point, but kids who are in Grade 1 and in Grade 3 will not be able to do it safely based on this plan.

Michelle Gill Caird

There is definitely evidence that young children can and do spread the virus, so for us K-3 teachers, we are basically part of a large experiment to see how far, fast and wide our youngest students can transmit the virus. I'm not sure I want to be willing to participate in scientific research when it could mean infecting my husband, who is at high risk for developing serious complication and/or death.

ON TWITTER

On the Annual Representative Assembly

Ms. O @MsOTweets77

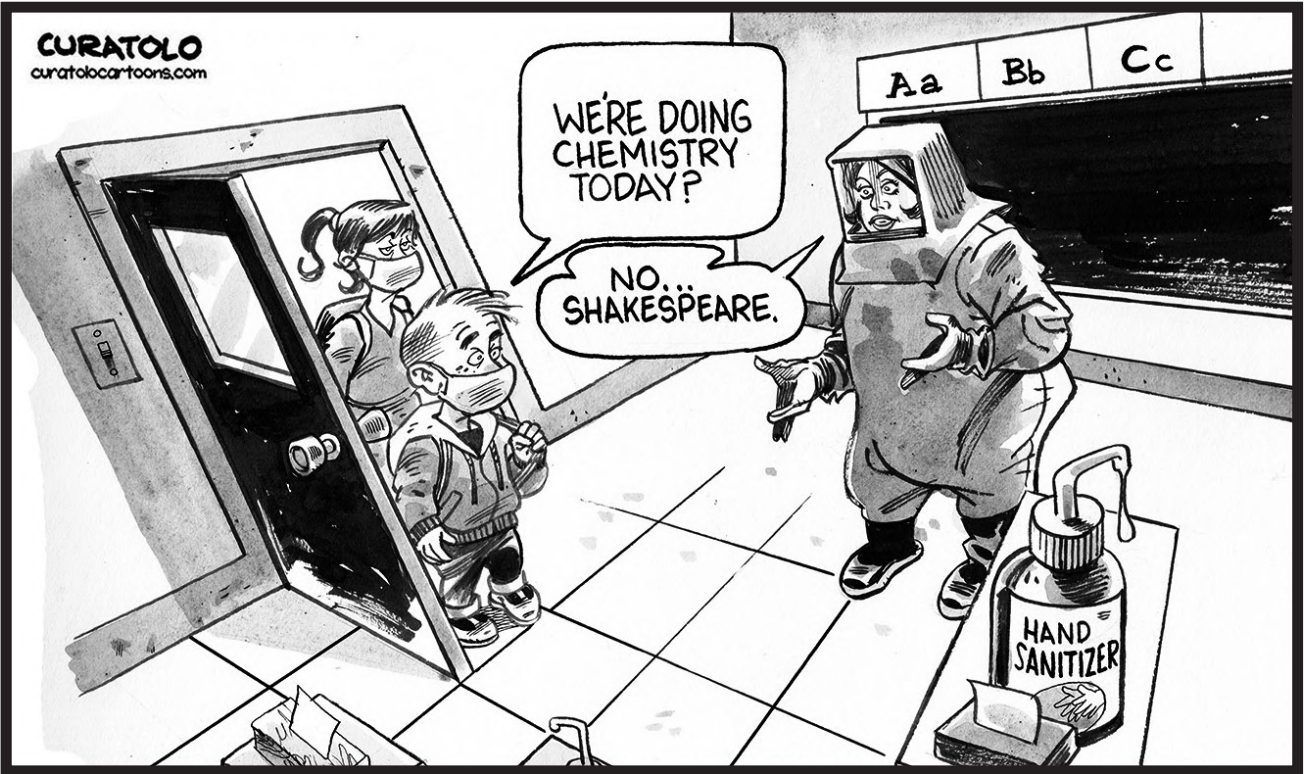
TEACHERS approved the budget. Not a union boss. Not a union head. Not a union department. TEACHERS decided how those membership dues will be dedicated. Remember this when someone tells you it's the "union."

Kevin McBean @kmcbean

Day 2 of @albertateachers #ARA2020 means debate on budget and resolutions that advance public education and serve students and teachers. This is democracy in action — no "union bosses" here, though I appreciate advocacy and leadership from @schill_dawg!

Jenny Regal @JennyRegalYYC

Still awake after adjournment almost two hours ago. Immensely proud of the dedication of #ARA2020 delegates. It got messy. Things didn't always go smoothly. There are many lessons to be learned. But what an experience! Kudos to all who participated with an open heart & mind!



FOR THE RECORD

“

“We do, unfortunately, have lots of pandemic left ... we have to be ready to adjust if new information emerges.”

”

- Dr. Lynora Saxinger during a telephone town hall with Alberta teachers

PEC tables motion of non-confidence in education minister

ATA News Staff

A motion of non-confidence in Education Minister Adriana LaGrange could be put to teachers across the province if the government’s current efforts to ensure a safe return to school are frustrated.

The resolution of non-confidence was moved by delegates from the floor of the Aug. 13–14 Annual Representative Assembly (ARA) but was referred to the ATA’s elected leadership when the meeting was adjourned before the vote could be held. All outstanding resolutions from ARA were reviewed by PEC at an emergent meeting Aug. 20.

PEC decided not to render a final decision on the motion of non-confidence at this time and tabled the motion to a future meeting.

“I was pleased by the minister’s willingness to meet with us this week and to listen to teachers’ concerns, but we still need the government to take actions to improve the plans for school re-entry,” said ATA president Jason Schilling.

Schilling said teachers at ARA expressed their lack of confidence in the minister but also expressed a clear need to work with the ministry to bring about a better plan for returning to school.

“Ensuring schools reopen as safely as possible is our top priority right now, and we need to be able to talk with the minister to get results on that,” Schilling said.

Tabling the resolution allows PEC to bring it back at any future council meeting, when they could deal with it in a number of ways, including referring it to a vote of all members.

Bill that ATA president Jason Schilling says is an attempt to silence organized labour has been passed by the Alberta government.

Bill 32: *Restoring Balance in Alberta’s Workplaces Act*, was introduced in the Alberta legislature on July 7 and received royal assent on July 29.

The bill will require unions and associations like the Alberta Teachers’ Association to obtain opt-in approval before using member dues on political and advocacy functions.

“This government wants to prevent teachers’ voices from being heard on issues such as classroom conditions in the face of COVID-19, class size, support for inclusion and adequacy of funding for public education,” Schilling said.

Unifor called the bill an attack on the rights of working people.

“Jason Kenney is using government regulations to benefit his friends in big business,” said Unifor western regional director Gavin McGarrigle in a news release.

The United Nurses of Alberta criticized the bill for being undemocratic.

“Bill 32 creates an unnecessary administrative burden for unions and interferes in a democratic process that is determined by our members,” said UNA president Heather Smith.

The government has stated that Bill 32

Unfinished business

Council also dealt with six other outstanding resolutions from ARA, including ones on school re-entry, curriculum and funding for outreach schools.

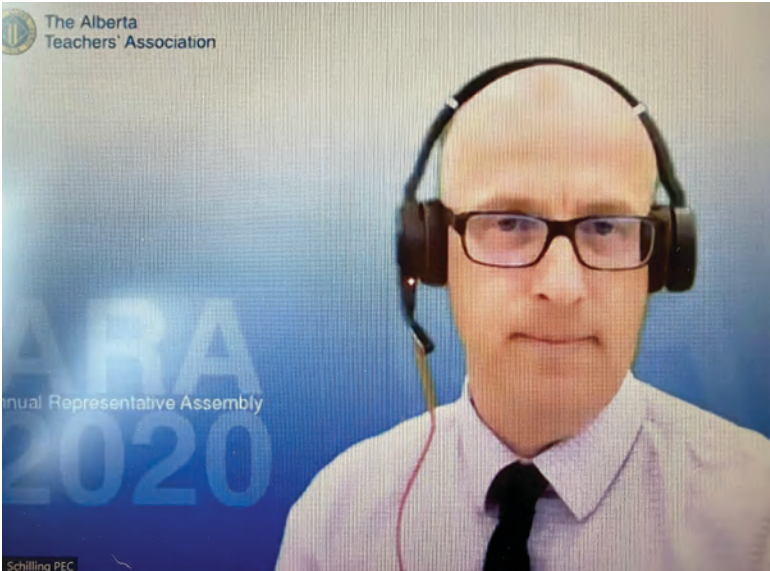
One motion on delaying the start of school was adopted as “action taken” and another resolution on school restart was not adopted, as the intent of the resolution was addressed by other policies already approved by ARA.

Resolutions affirmed by Council:

- Be it resolved that the Association demand that those advising on curriculum include Alberta K–12 classroom teachers who are representative and supportive of the diverse communities in Alberta.
- Be it resolved that the Association urge the Government of Alberta to reinstate the per-site grant for outreach schools.

Resolutions referred to staff for study:

- Be it resolved that the Association engage immediately in discussion with Alberta Health and the chief medical officer of health about the availability of a rapid diagnostic test (under one minute) in schools to detect the presence of SARS-CoV-2 in students and staff.
- Be it resolved that the Association urge the Government of Alberta to investigate the proliferation of programs offering “classroom settings” delivering curriculum to students in the fall outside of the purview of the Education Act, as they are not under the supervision of a school board or operating under a charter approved by the minister of education. ■



ATA president Jason Schilling addresses delegates during ARA.

Teachers need to fight, ATA president urges

Cory Hare
ATA News Managing Editor

Public education is under attack, so teachers are going to have to fight for what they believe in over the next year.

That was the message shared by Alberta Teachers’ Association president Jason Schilling Aug. 13 during an address to delegates of the organization’s Annual Representative Assembly (ARA).

The annual policy meeting normally takes place during the May long weekend, but due to COVID, it was postponed and is being held via video conference Aug. 13 and 14.

“I am aware that many of you in this Zoom conference know full well the constant pressure teachers and public education have faced in this province,” Schilling said. “I also know you are frustrated, angry and worried about what the future holds. So am I.”

Schilling used the word *uncertainty* to describe the theme for the past year.

He referenced the UCP government’s decisions to reduce LGBTQ+ rights, change the date of teachers’ salary arbitration, undertake curriculum redesign without input from active teachers, cut education funding and hijack teachers’ pension fund.

Schilling said the pension issue prompted one of the largest political engagement activities he’s ever seen teachers undertake, resulting in tens of thousands of emails, letters, phone calls and visits to MLAs.

“The government heard your voices but they chose not to listen, which tells me more about their ethics and not your unwavering and continued advocacy,” Schilling said.

The emergence of the COVID pandemic raised issues of income security for substitute teachers as well as concerns about equity and the well-being of students. And while the Association worked with government in an attempt to create a plan for a safe return to in-class teaching, its concerns have not been adequately addressed.

“Again, I know we were heard, just not listened to,” Schilling said. “Now we find ourselves on the cusp of a re-entry to school plan that falls short on addressing the safety concerns of teachers.”

Schilling noted that teachers showed their ethics by rising to the challenge when asked to change overnight how they teach due to the COVID pandemic. He expressed hope for the future.

“For me there always has to exist an element of hope,” Schilling said. “Some have said to me ... ‘how can you have hope in the face of so much negativity?’ My answer is simple. I have to. We have to. We are fighting for something greater than the moment we are in. We are fighting for the future of our profession and our students.”

Schilling said that, in the last few weeks, he’s reviewed the Association’s central objectives — to advance and promote the cause of public education in Alberta, improve the teaching profession and increase public interest in the importance of public education. He pledged that members of the ATA’s elected council and staff will continue to work with government to achieve the Association’s central objectives.

“There are those who are opposed to a strong public education system in Alberta. They will try to divide and to split us. They will attempt to undermine teachers, our Association, our values, and one of the best public education systems in the world,” he said. “We cannot allow that to happen. We need to stand together, united as a profession and not get distracted by the little things.”

He added, “I believe in public education, I believe in my students and I believe in you, my colleagues. I hope that we will continue to stand and shout that public education matters. I also believe that next year we are going to have to fight for what we believe in. I know I am ready for that fight; my hope is that you are too.” ■

Government sticks to re-entry plan

Alberta Education declines ATA call for delayed return

Cory Hare
ATA News Managing Editor

With school re-opening on the near horizon, it's time for government to act on teachers' concerns and improve its re-entry plan to increase the safety of students and teachers.

That was the conclusion of ATA president Jason Schilling following a meeting with Education Minister Adriana LaGrange on Wednesday, Aug. 19.

"We put everything on the table and we had a fulsome discussion about the things that are big concerns for teachers. Whether [government] truly listened to what we had to say, that's on them," Schilling said. "We did the best that we can to make sure that our points were put across. It's government's turn to act on this."

While nothing was formally agreed to, Schilling said he expects to hear



The Alberta Teachers' Association has suggested a delay to the start of the school year so that adequate preparations can take place.

more from the minister on the issues discussed.

During the meeting, Schilling called for the minister to delay the start of school until after Labour Day so that teachers, principals and other staff can prepare for the arrival of students. Beyond Labour Day, he suggested a staggered re-entry based on local readiness.

Schilling also reiterated a list of priorities that the ATA has been advocating for throughout the summer. The priorities were formulated following a survey of teachers and consultation with Dr. Lynora Saxinger, a leading epidemiologist.

"Teachers want to go back to work, but we have to make sure that it's safe," Schilling said.

Schilling demanded the meeting with the minister following a discussion at the Annual Representative Assembly on Aug. 14 during which delegates debated whether or not to pass a motion of non-confidence in the minister.

"Teachers have been expressing to me that they feel like they've not been listened to in terms of their concerns," Schilling said. "I was glad to have the conversation with the minister today. I reiterated the fact that I want to have as much open communication back and forth so that we are able to express the concerns of our members to the government and, in turn, hopefully have the government act on the concerns that we're putting forward."

In July the province announced that it would proceed with the first of three possible scenarios for returning to school, whereby students would return under "near normal" conditions. The plan calls for schools to practice physical distancing where possible, reorganize rooms to allow more space and create student cohorts where possible. The province updated the plan on Aug. 4 to include mandatory masks for staff and students in grades 4 to 12 where physical distancing cannot be maintained. ■

Adriana LaGrange, post-meeting statement

"As always, my ministry, department officials and I are happy to meet our stakeholders to receive their input on this important matter.

Ensuring the safety and well-being of our staff and students has guided all decision making around school re-entry since we first cancelled in-person classes in March and we thank the ATA for their role in helping us develop the current school re-entry plan.

We understand that parents and teachers across the province want a safe return to classes in the fall. That is why we will continue to follow the expert medical advice of our chief medical officer of health, who approved our school re-entry plan and who, along with her team, worked to develop the health guidelines for schools. The plan also has support from our school superintendents and schools boards and was developed in consultation with the education system as a whole.

As we continue to work with Dr. Hinshaw and our education system, we will make adjustments as necessary."

Teachers' priorities:

- An ongoing multistakeholder working group that includes public health
- A clear plan for transitioning schools between scenarios
- Increased physical distancing through reduced class sizes
- Funding for enhanced staff, protective equipment and HVAC improvements
- Better plans for screening and testing of students and staff
- Resources and supports to ensure the safety and availability of substitute teachers

Listen in

[Listen to Dr. Lynora Saxinger's telephone town hall with Alberta teachers.](#)

Q&A

continued from page 2

or senior high school settings, but this is why Dr. Saxinger and the chief medical officer of health have called for mandatory wearing of masks to reduce risks to more acceptable levels.

Inherent in being a professional is a commitment to public service, even if it means accepting a measure of personal risk or potential sacrifice. All of the women and men around me in this hospital setting realize this and have reported to do their critical work knowing that doing so entails some personal risk. The same is true of taxi drivers and grocery store clerks. Are we to expect less of ourselves as professionals? Are Albertans to expect less of us as a profession?

Students need teachers, and both students and teachers need to be in school. The Alberta Teachers' Association is working hard to ensure that this can be done with reasonable safety and that teachers can serve the community as the professionals they are. ■

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

School re-entry and racism among concerns for ARA delegates

ATA News Staff

A safe return to schools this fall was the focus of teachers at the Alberta Teachers' Association's 103rd Annual Representative Assembly (ARA) held virtually on Aug. 13 and 14.

Generally held on the May long weekend, this was the first ever virtual assembly. It saw 450 teacher delegates representing all teachers in Alberta pass resolutions calling for

- the repeal of Bill 22, which would allow the Alberta Teachers' Retirement Fund full control over choosing investment managers (Resolution 3-6);
- the inclusion of antiracism teachings in the curriculum redesign (3-39); and
- using legal measures to seek an overturn of Bill 32, to prevent infringements on teachers' freedoms of speech and association (3-38).

School re-entry (3-31)

Teachers discussed school re-entry concerns, including the need for

reduced class sizes, increased support staff, better mental health supports and the placement of public health nurses in schools. Delegates also called for the establishment of an ongoing multisector consultation committee to guide the re-entry to schools and beyond.

ATA president Jason Schilling, in his address to delegates, said that the government's return to school plan lacks clarity and adequate funding, and is forcing teachers and parents to make very difficult choices.

Delegates from the floor also moved an emergent motion of non-confidence in Education Minister Adriana LaGrange, but ultimately referred it to the Association's executive council after debate that ran into early Saturday morning. This prompted president Schilling to demand a meeting with LaGrange to discuss teachers' school safety concerns.

Antiracism (3-39)

Inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement, delegates passed an antiracism resolution calling on

the government to ensure that the curriculum redesign includes specific outcomes related to antiracism teaching and the histories of Black, Indigenous and People of Colour.

"Systemic, societal change is often lead by the work of teachers in classrooms," said executive council member Robert Twerdoclib, who introduced the emergent resolution. He noted that antiracism concepts and essential questions are absent from the draft scope and sequence for K-12 curriculum.

One of the delegates who spoke in favour of the resolution noted that racism is experienced daily in Alberta.

"As a first generation Black Canadian, the current events have really affected me," she said. "I wonder how students have been affected."

Budget

Delegates also passed the Association's line-by-line budget for the upcoming year, including a fee increase of \$81 per year. ■



Congratulations to our convention contest winner Zoe Fenelon!

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ATA executive secretary Dennis Theobald delivers his annual report during ARA 2020, held Aug. 13 and 14 via webinar.

Teachers resilient in face of challenges

Kim Clement
ATA News Staff

Emergency remote teaching coupled with a highly ideological government agenda have tested the resiliency, resourcefulness and commitment of teachers, said executive secretary Dennis Theobald at the 103rd Annual Representative Assembly (ARA) on Aug. 13.

Speaking to more than 400 delegates who attended ARA via Zoom, Theobald said that the suspension of in-school learning has highlighted how central schools are to the well-being of students, their families and the community, but also the capacity of the system to adapt to new realities.

“We will have to confront these [issues] with solidarity, strength of purpose and an absolute commitment to standing up for our profession and for the children that we serve.”

Teachers have responded with an exceptional ability to seek out unique and creative solutions to get the job done in the face of longstanding challenges and deficiencies.

“Unacceptably large class sizes that were once a pedagogical challenge are fast becoming a critical health threat,” said Theobald.

He drew attention to the government’s lack of a credible plan for school re-entry, as well as inadequate supports for students with special learning needs made worse with the laying off of more than 20,000 education workers in April. In addition, the shortage of substitute teachers in many parts of the province will be amplified by restrictions on movement during a time when their services will be most in demand.

With all of these issues, Theobald says there is no shortage of advocacy work, and the Association has been working to influence the government’s plans for a safe return to school in September.

“While teachers’ concerns have been advanced and, in some measures, listened and responded to, we remain very concerned about restarting schools, particularly if the resources, personnel and standards are not in place to enable teachers, students and staff to do so safely,” he said.

Looking internally to Barnett House operations, Theobald says a constant and guiding question for the Association has always been, how can we do better for our members? He stressed the importance of not shying away from asking hard questions and seeking out innovative solutions. He noted that the Association recently undertook a review of its information technology system infrastructure with the goal of enhancing members’ digital experience while containing costs, as well as the streamlining of departments to better serve members. The Member Services and Teacher Welfare program areas will be merged under the new title of Teacher Employment Services.

“This new design, together with the reorganization of committee structures supporting collective bargaining, employment benefits and pension will enhance our ability to support teachers in matters relating to their employment, individually and collectively,” he said. “We will be able to deploy staff more efficiently and flexibly in response to emerging demands and challenges and we will also ensure that we have access to expertise necessary to do our best work for teachers.”

Theobald reminded delegates that teachers will be dealing with the pandemic for a long time, as well as the various challenges posed by the government in terms of curriculum, organized labour and public education, but he urged them to take heart.

“We will have to confront these with solidarity, strength of purpose and an absolute commitment to standing up for our profession and for the children that we serve.”

Fee increases by 6.4 per cent

Annual fee will increase by \$81 to \$1,347



Pedro Carriel
ATA Treasurer and
Chief Financial Officer

On Aug. 13 and 14, delegates of the 103rd Annual Representative Assembly (ARA) approved the budget for the 2020/21 fiscal year, resulting in a revised fee of \$1,347 per year for a full-time teacher.

The primary driver of the fee increase is an anticipated loss of 1500 full-time teaching positions as a result of provincial funding cuts to school boards. The ATA budget includes approximately 120 changes or adjustments compared to the present year’s budget. Many of these changes are aimed at reducing spending or minimizing spending increases in order to offset the reduced revenue from a lower teacher count. For example, the budget includes no allowances for new staff positions or negotiated salary increases.

As priorities, the Alberta Teachers’ Association aims to enhance capacity in targeted areas, respond to an expected increase in demand for services and support from members, meet legislated professional responsibilities, and provide high quality service and programs, while maintaining overall expenditures that are largely consistent with the present year’s budget.

ARA delegates approved funds to support a small number of new initiatives. While some programs have been discontinued, compared to the 2019/20 budget, overall expenditures are expected to increase by 1.03 per cent. The fee increase and increased revenue from advertising will help fund the targeted increase in spending.

In looking to deliver better service to members and increase support for central table bargaining, a new Bargaining Advisory Committee was approved, taking over the duties of the Teacher Welfare Liaisons. The planned changes in teacher welfare have a net cost savings.

There is a general consensus that demands on Member Services will continue to grow in 2020/21. To better respond to this demand and enhance the Association’s ability to conduct discipline investigations, investigation training/certification will be made available to staff. Furthermore, funds were allocated for work to begin on developing a program of awareness about the Association’s discipline and mediation services.

In addition, funding was approved to support the continuance of the Indigenous Advisory Circle, which aligns with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s Calls to Action and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

With 2019 ARA having approved a budget review, funds were designated for this work to continue in 2020/21 and will be overseen by the Finance Committee. Increased funding has also been budgeted for the Women’s Leadership Conference, and with an emphasis on facilitating member attendance at Association events, approval was provided for child/elder care subsidies for all Association activities.

Finally, with a focus on the Association’s long-term fiscal resiliency, delegates approved repayment into the Special Emergency Fund, as planned for the 2020/21 fiscal year.

At the conclusion of two productive days of debate, delegates approved an overall budget with a net surplus of \$69,400. The annual fee for associate members will increase to \$202.05.

Teachers grapple with closure of distance learning centre

Cailynn Klingbeil
Special to the ATA News



The availability of distance learning options in Alberta stands to be impacted by the closure of the Alberta Distance Learning Centre.

The upcoming closure of the Alberta Distance Learning Centre (ADLC) is creating uncertainty across the Pembina Hills School Division, as more than 100 teachers and support staff currently working at the centre must transition elsewhere.

“There’s a human factor to this that we can’t ignore,” said Jason Schilling, Alberta Teachers’ Association president.

“There are 79 teachers who work there and 34 support staff, and so some people will be able to transition into other areas of the school district, but some people will be losing their jobs, unfortunately.”

In late February, the ADLC learned its service agreement with Alberta Education would not be renewed

ADLC CLOSURE continued on page 11

NOTICE

On March 30, 2020, a hearing committee of the Professional Conduct Committee established under the *Teaching Profession Act* found that Wade Stuart Deering engaged in unprofessional conduct. The hearing committee declared Deering permanently ineligible for membership in the Association effective March 30, 2020.

Highlighted resolutions

Local resolutions

2-4/20
Edmonton Public Teachers

BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA) and the Association collaborate on a model policy to regulate and govern the use of third-party tracking applications in all ASBA member school authorities.

2-6/20
Edmonton Public Teachers

BE IT RESOLVED that the Association urge the Government of Alberta to provide funding to school authorities in order to provide free menstrual products for students in all Alberta schools.

2-7/20
Edmonton Public Teachers

BE IT RESOLVED that the Association urge the Government of Alberta to not implement any high-stakes testing programs for students in Division I.

2-8/20
Edmonton Public Teachers

BE IT RESOLVED that long-term policy 24.3.1.1 be amended to read— “Cosponsors and administrators who hold funds in trust for the benefit of Alberta teachers should invest these funds in a manner that identifies and manages environmental, social and governance (ESG) risks by

1. considering ESG risk factors when evaluating potential investments and reinvestments,
2. using their influence and voting shares to help ensure that corporations in which they have invested make responsible decisions and
3. after completing due diligence divesting from corporations when appropriate.”

2-12/20
Rocky View

BE IT RESOLVED that the Association urge the Government of Alberta to reinstate comprehensive reporting of class size data on the government’s Open Data portal.

2-15/20
Rocky View

BE IT RESOLVED that the Association is opposed to Quebec’s Bill 21 and urges the Alberta and Canadian governments to stand up for the human rights of all Canadians.

2-16/20
Rocky View

BE IT RESOLVED that reasonable and regular time for lesson preparation and assessment be allocated within existing assignable time.

2-20/20
Northern Spirit

BE IT RESOLVED that the Association urge the Government of Alberta to continue fully funding the Program Unit Funding program.

2-27/20
Calgary Public Teachers

BE IT RESOLVED that the Annual Representative Assembly’s business must conclude by 2130 hours on any given day that the Assembly is held.

2-35/20
Calgary Public Teachers

BE IT RESOLVED that the Association allow all members of provincial ATA committees to choose, in advance, whether to receive documents pertaining to their committee work and meetings digitally or in print.

2-39/20
Parkland Teachers

BE IT RESOLVED that the Association explore establishing partnerships with audiovisual companies that could be used by Association subgroups.

Provincial Executive Council resolutions

1-44/20
(Administrative Procedure)
Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED that administrative procedure 1.3.5.2 be amended to read –

“The Association believes that employment equity is a positive process leading to equal opportunities in education and employment, and so it endorses the concept of equity in employment for all people without discrimination.”

1-53/20
(Administrative Procedure)
Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED that administrative procedure 1.3.7.6 be amended by substitution to read –

“The Association, in coordination with the investment manager, oversees the Association’s investment portfolio and continues to consider environmental, social and governance risk factors when evaluating potential investment decisions.”

3-4/20
Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED that, in Alberta, public education refers to public, separate and francophone education.

3-5/20
Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED that the Teachers’ Pension Plan allow teachers to contribute to the plan for periods of Canadian, allied or other approved military service not covered by another plan.

3-6/20
Provincial Executive Council
Calgary Public Teachers
Rocky View

BE IT RESOLVED that the Association demand the Government of Alberta repeal Bill 22, thus allowing the Alberta Teachers’ Retirement Fund (ATRF) full control over choosing investment managers, including the use of internal ATRF investment management.

3-9/20
Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED that locals are encouraged to establish women in educational leadership committees.

3-10/20
Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED that the Association urge the Government of Alberta to allow students to use appropriate, secured educational technologies, in addition to scientific and graphing calculators, during math and science diploma exams and other standardized assessments.

3-11/20
Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED that the Association urge the Government of Alberta to supplement the English Language Arts Authorized Novels and Nonfiction Annotated List with a more general guide to text selection.

3-13/20
Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED that the Association accept the scientific consensus that anthropogenic climate change is a real and critical challenge affecting the planet and the future of humanity.

3-14/20
Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED that the Association support the inclusion of curriculum that explicitly addresses issues relating to anthropogenic climate change in a manner that is subject and age appropriate.

3-15/20
Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED that the Association support the inclusion of curriculum that allows embedded opportunities to address issues relating to anthropogenic climate change, giving students an opportunity to express their views.

3-16/20
Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED that the Association urge school authorities to adopt and implement policies that respect students’ growth as active citizens, including voluntary participation in democratic actions and activities while addressing potential risks to students.



Resolutions approved at ARA 2020

Assembly resolutions

3-17/20
Provincial Executive Council
BE IT RESOLVED that the Association urge every local to engage in work to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s education-related calls to action and operate in the spirit of the objectives and principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

3-19/20
Provincial Executive Council
BE IT RESOLVED that the Association provide the means to identify preferred pronouns for all Association events for use on nametags.

3-20/20
Provincial Executive Council
BE IT RESOLVED that the Association’s online member database allow individuals to identify their preferred pronouns.

3-21/20
Provincial Executive Council
BE IT RESOLVED that gender-neutral washrooms be available and publicly identified at all Association events.

3-22/20
Provincial Executive Council
BE IT RESOLVED that the Association and its subgroups allow only the administrator of the ATA Group RRSP to be a financial presenter or financial vendor at Association events.

3-28/20
Provincial Executive Council
BE IT RESOLVED that, pursuant to general bylaw 9(2)(a), the fee payable by an active member employed full-time be \$1,347 per annum effective 2020 09 01.

3-29/20
Provincial Executive Council
BE IT RESOLVED that, pursuant to general bylaw 9(2)(f), the fee payable by an associate member be \$202.05 per annum effective 2020 09 01.

3-30/20
Provincial Executive Council
BE IT RESOLVED that school authorities be urged to share annually a report of their joint worksite health and safety committees’ work, including a report of aggregate data for the school year, to be shared with the appropriate Association local president by November 1.

3-31/20
Provincial Executive Council
BE IT RESOLVED that the Association urge the Government of Alberta to immediately provide new funding to school authorities to hire additional staff to support safe re-entry to school, including

1. teachers to reduce student cohort group size,
2. school-based administrators to help manage issues emerging as a result of COVID-19,
3. counsellors to support the increased mental health needs of students,
4. custodians to ensure ongoing cleaning,
5. educational assistants to help promote and ensure health-related guidelines are being observed and
6. public health nurses to assist with monitoring the health of students and staff and responding to potential infections.

3-32/20
Provincial Executive Council
BE IT RESOLVED that the Association urge the Government of Alberta to fund school authorities to place under contract the equivalent of 10 per cent of the full-time teaching force to ensure substitute teachers are readily available and supported while schools operate during the pandemic.

3-33/20
Provincial Executive Council
BE IT RESOLVED that the Association urge the Government of Alberta to establish a multisectoral consultation body that includes representation of teachers (through the Alberta Teachers’ Association), parents (through the Alberta School Councils’ Association), and superintendents and trustees through their respective organizations, with Alberta Health Services and Alberta Education, to identify challenges and scenarios, operationalize reopening plans, and assess and support ongoing adaptation in light of changing circumstances and science.

3-34/20
Provincial Executive Council
BE IT RESOLVED that the Association condemn the government layoff of over 25,000 educational assistants, support staff, bus drivers and substitute teachers when in-person classes were cancelled at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and call upon the government to restore these positions as part of the return-to-school strategy.

3-35/20
Provincial Executive Council
BE IT RESOLVED that the Association urge the Government of Alberta to restore full program unit funding to three years in Alberta’s public, separate and francophone school authorities.

3-36/20
Provincial Executive Council
BE IT RESOLVED that the Association urge the Government of Alberta to restore full funding for the Regional Collaborative Service Delivery program that provided cross-ministry supports and services to students in Alberta schools.

3-37/20
Provincial Executive Council
BE IT RESOLVED that the Association urge the Government of Alberta to fund enrolment growth by modifying the funding model to ensure that every additional student who enters Alberta’s K–12 public education system is fully funded.

3-38/20
Provincial Executive Council
BE IT RESOLVED that the Association use all legal measures at its disposal to seek the overturn of Bill 32, Restoring Balance in Alberta’s Workplaces Act, and to prevent infringements on teachers’ freedoms of speech and association.

3-39/20
Provincial Executive Council
BE IT RESOLVED that the Association urge the Government of Alberta to ensure that curriculum redesign includes specific outcomes related to antiracism teaching and the histories of Black, Indigenous and People of Colour.

3-40/20
Provincial Executive Council
BE IT RESOLVED that the Government of Alberta ensure, at minimum, that no public, separate or francophone school authority receives a reduction in funding in the current or subsequent years as a result of a decline in the student count for 2020/21 due to COVID-19 and that increases in enrolment are fully funded.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

4-1/20
Edmonton Public Teachers
BE IT RESOLVED that the Association urge the Government of Alberta and the Ministry of Education to actively engage the Association and teachers in curriculum development as they are both subject-matter and pedagogical experts in curriculum matters.

4-2/20
Calgary Public Teachers
BE IT RESOLVED that the Central Table Bargaining Committee immediately engage the Teachers’ Employer Bargaining Association for the purposes of negotiating new provisions for the payment of quarantine pay for substitute teachers.



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ADLC CLOSURE

continued from page 7

beyond the 2021/22 school year and its funding would drop from \$14 million in 2020/21 to \$7 million in 2021/22.

The centre has since decided to close a year early — in June 2021 — over concerns about its ability to operate on a \$7 million budget.

Formerly the Alberta Correspondence School, ADLC has been administered by the Pembina Hills School Division since 1997. (Pembina Hills also maintains its own separate distance education school, called Vista Virtual School.)

The provincial centre provides distance education to students across Alberta, as well as teacher support services.

Students access ADLC for a variety of reasons, Schilling said, from younger students taking supplementary courses not offered at their school to older students depending on the centre to complete high school. Additionally, during natural disasters such as floods or forest fires, ADLC has stepped in to provide materials to affected schools to ensure continuity, Schilling said.

Colin Aitchison, press secretary to Alberta’s education minister, [told CBC Calgary in March](#) that the funding changes to ADLC would provide equitable funding to all distance learning providers in Alberta.

While ADLC was at one time the only distance education provider in Alberta, there are now 32 school districts offering their own distance learning to students, he said.

When the ADLC closes, Schilling expects that school districts without their own distance learning programs will have to pay other school districts for their services rather than access ADLC’s services for free.

“The ADLC has been doing this for over 100 years really, really well,” Schilling said. “Despite other boards developing distance learning models, a provincially authorized agency is still needed.”

Schilling said that a competitive model where school divisions market programs and fight for distance learning enrolment sits in opposition to the goals of public education.

In addition to the impact on students and school districts, concern exists for teachers.

Of the 79 teachers at ADLC, Schilling said about 20 are telecommuters who live in places like Lethbridge, Medicine Hat and Calgary. Schilling said those teachers now face a hard decision: move to the Barrhead and Westlock area to stay with the school district, or look elsewhere for work.

Some other teachers with the Pembina Hills School Division may also be affected, Schilling said, as teachers with temporary or probationary contracts may lose their jobs to incoming ADLC staff.

“It’s not ideal at all,” Schilling said.

As president of the Pembina Hills Local 22, Michelle Savoie has been hearing from concerned members throughout the summer, including both teachers at ADLC and at schools in the division. With about 360 teachers in the division, the shuffling of 79 teachers from ADLC is significant.

“They’re all concerned, wondering what does this mean for me?” Savoie said.

A “targeted teacher reduction plan” has been introduced to incentivize some teachers to leave, Savoie said, but the situation is still nerve-racking for teachers in the district with less experience, who fear getting bumped out of their positions.

“It’s the unknown about it all that’s worrisome,” she said. ■

Teachers form Black advocacy group

Cory Hare
ATA News Managing Editor

A group of Alberta teachers is working to improve the lives of African-Canadian teachers and students through a new organization called the Black Teachers’ Association (BTA) of Alberta.

Following a June rally at the Alberta legislature to protest anti-Black racism, Edmonton teachers Sarah Adomako-Ansah and Andrew Parker began discussing the idea of forming an organization focused on making positive change for African Canadians and other racial minorities.

“I feel very hopeful. I feel like change is not a bad word right now. It’s a good word,” said Adomako-Ansah.

As the vision for the new organization was formulating, Adomako-Ansah and Parker held discussions with several other African-Canadian teachers that revealed a lot of commonalities in their lived experiences, such as feeling isolated due to the relatively small number of African-Canadian teachers, a lack of resources that pertain to the African-Canadian experience and difficulty advancing in the profession.

Another common experience that members have expressed is facing racist attitudes or comments from parents or others while those in authority did nothing to stop or address it.

“In many cases, it was clearly and boldly racist,” Parker said. “These are the situations that we are hoping to end ... if we just have our faces in there and have the support of the BTA at all times.”

The new organization is being built on five pillars: representation, communication, inclusion, providing support and networking. It aims to collaborate with school districts and other like-minded organizations to foster positive change. One focus is helping more African Canadians enter the teaching profession and gain employment in Alberta classrooms.

“If you have those teachers in front of those kids, the dialogue changes, the understandings change and potentially society could change, so that we don’t have to hear any of these instances of systemic racism,” Parker said.

Another of the BTA’s aims is to help educate the larger community about the real trials faced by African-Canadian teachers.

“We need, not just allies, not just Black teachers, but everyone needs to start talking and listening to each other,” Parker said. “Because in many cases, talking and listening can



SUPPLIED

Edmonton teachers Sarah Adomako Ansah and Andrew Parker have spearheaded the formation of the Black Teachers Association of Alberta to advocate for African-Canadian teachers throughout the province.

prevent future issues from happening again.”

One of the BTA’s key messages is that equity and equality are not the same thing, said member Gail-Ann Wilson.

For instance, she noted that African-Canadian students may experience specific issues that aren’t applicable to other students, such as when their hair doesn’t agree with school dress codes or attracts unwanted attention from other students.

“There is a very different set of needs that teachers have to have an awareness of and they have to be able to work within a greater understanding,” Wilson said.

Since the BTA’s inception, its online meetings have attracted up to 40 attendees and its Instagram account has more than 1,100 followers. Parker has received approximately 150 emails from throughout the province and elsewhere. The vast majority of the messages have been supportive; a few have been dismissive of African-Canadian concerns.

“In many of those instances it’s people who just don’t understand

what’s happening right now in society,” Parker said.

Black Lives Matter

Parker said he saw the Rodney King beating on television when he was very young and asked his parents what it was about. That’s when he learned the term police brutality. At the time he assumed that such events would never occur again, but he can now recite from memory the names of Black people who have been killed by police: Treyvon Martin (Florida, 2012), Philando Castile (Minnesota, 2016), Ahmaud Arbery (Georgia, February 2020), Breonna Taylor (Kentucky, March 2020) and George Floyd (Minnesota, May 2020).

“For people in the Black community, when we see this over and over and over again, we just keep asking ourselves, why isn’t anything changing?” Parker said.

With a global movement now underway in the wake of Floyd’s death, Parker is hopeful that meaningful change can occur.

“Clearly, there’s an issue and not just in the United States — in Canada as well,” he said. “But I think, via reconciliation and talking and listening, we can make a lot of change, not only in education, but in society.” ■



Gail-Ann Wilson, BTA member

BTA’s message to potential allies

“Allied work is so important and for any of our Caucasian brothers and sisters who are thinking, ‘Well, is this a place for me? Is this not a place for me?’ I’ll say point blank right now: this is a place for you because dealing with Black teachers is dealing with all teachers. It’s going to make the entire education system, top to bottom, a better place and a safer place.” – Andrew Parker

“You are not a stranger to us and we’re not a stranger to you. We are choosing to be active in this work that we’re doing. We want you to be comfortable in also being active in doing work with us, alongside us, and to not feel that you have to walk behind or that you don’t have a place or you don’t fit in at all.” – Gail-Ann Wilson



Become a Professional Development Facilitator!

PD facilitators are assigned to work with specific locals on a regional basis. They work with PD chairs and PD committees to provide professional development within the region and support the work of Professional Development staff officers.

The Alberta Teachers' Association is seeking outstanding classroom teachers representing all grade levels and subject areas from Regions B, D and E. The three-year appointments for these assignments will begin August 1, 2020.

The application process has three parts:

1. Provide a letter of interest.
2. Download and complete the [application form](#) from the ATA website.
3. Provide a resumé.

Successful candidates are expected to attend two training sessions throughout the year. The ATA covers release time and associated expenses to complete the work and provides an honorarium.

As a courtesy, please advise your superintendent and principal that you will be applying. All applicants must be active or associate members of the ATA and hold an Alberta teaching certificate.

**APPLICATION DEADLINE IS
SEPTEMBER 30, 2020.**

Send your letter of interest, resumé and completed application form to Professional Development, Alberta Teachers' Association, 11010 142 Street NW, Edmonton AB T5N 2R1, or e-mail them to Monique Gravel, Executive Staff Officer monique.gravel@ata.ab.ca.



The Alberta Teachers' Association

PD-290 2020 06

Restructuring at Barnett House designed to enhance service to members

Member Services and Teacher Welfare merged to form Teacher Employment Services

ATA News Staff

The Alberta Teachers' Association is merging the Member Services and Teacher Welfare program areas on Sept. 1, 2020, as part of a restructuring being described as the most significant reorganization at the ATA in more than 30 years. The new program area, Teacher Employment Services (TES), will serve as a one-stop shop for teachers looking for advice and assistance related to their work life.

The transition will also see the full integration of the Association's professional discipline functions under the Government program area.

"This reorganization is intended not merely to maintain service in the face of increasing demand and external changes, but to enhance service to members," said ATA executive secretary Dennis Theobald. "From the individual member's perspective, the distinction between Teacher Welfare and Member Services can be obscure and create a barrier to service. For the vast majority of concerns, members will no longer have to puzzle out who in what program area they need to talk to."

Generally speaking, matters related to collective agreements, human rights and labour relations used to be handled by Teacher Welfare, whereas matters related to contracts of employment, the *Education Act* and other legislation were handled by Member Services. Increasingly, issues faced by members did not fall into neat categories, and the advice and assistance needed could require multiple avenues of consideration.

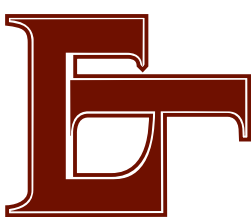
Robert Mazzotta, the Association's current co-ordinator of Member Services, will become

the co-ordinator of the new combined program area. Sean Brown has been appointed to the role of associate co-ordinator, collective bargaining, to oversee collective bargaining functions within the TES program area, and Tim Jeffares has been appointed associate co-ordinator, professional discipline, to oversee discipline functions within the Government program area.

"This is an exciting change for our staff, and I look forward to bringing this new team together," Mazzotta said. "The origins of this change come from asking ourselves, 'how can we serve members better,' and while there will be new challenges for our staff, this will enhance flexibility and responsiveness, and serving members is ultimately why we got into this work."

Additionally, new committee structures supporting the work of collective bargaining will also be implemented in the fall. A new Bargaining Advisory Committee will bring together one representative from each Association bargaining unit to enhance the amount of local feedback being provided to the Association's Central Table Bargaining Committee. Some executive staff officers in the TES program area will continue to serve as representatives of the bargaining agent to support local bargaining.

This reorganization was approved by Provincial Executive Council in June and implementation will continue through the 2020/21 school year. Some functions and structures will continue to be separate through the year ahead, but it is anticipated that structural changes will be completed in time for a unified program area budget to be presented to ARA in 2021. ■



ATA EDUCATIONAL TRUST

DEADLINE EXTENDED

Due to COVID-19 and the cancellation of many classes and events, the Board has extended the deadline for 2019/20 program recipients by one year.

- If you received a B T Keeler Continuing Education Bursary with a claim deadline of August 31, 2020, you now have until **August 31, 2021**.
- If you received a Morgex/Johnson Insurance Centennial Fund for Professional Development or an award to attend an ATA specialist council conference with a claim deadline of December 31, 2020, you now have until **December 31, 2021**.

Please refer to the website for more information!

AR-ET-40



SLIP US A TIP!
We want to hear about news in your school, district or local.

Please email managing editor Cory Hare at cory.hare@ata.ab.ca.

Teacher Welfare and Member Services to merge

PEC POINTS

Audrey Dutka
ATA News Staff

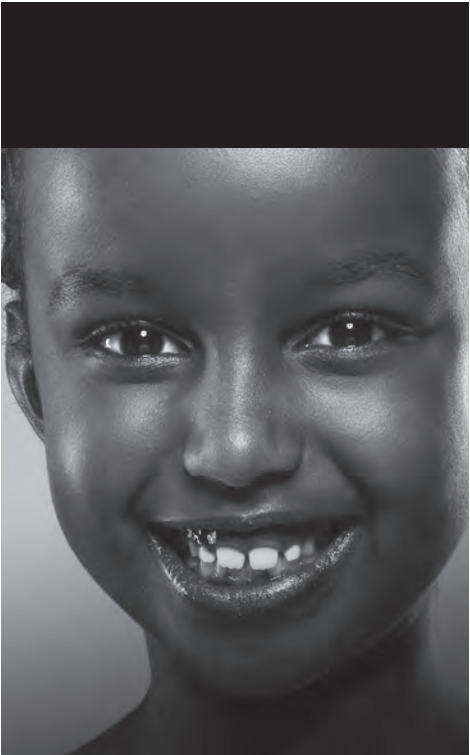
Highlights of the Provincial Executive Council meeting held June 11–12, 2020, via Zoom

1. Approved proposed amendments to Association bylaws, subject to approval at the 2020 Annual Representative Assembly, to change the voting eligibility cut-off date for active and associate members from Nov. 30 of each year to the first day that ballots can be cast in a PEC election.
2. In accordance with general bylaw 70, approved that voting for the 2021 Provincial Executive Council general election be conducted by electronic ballot.
3. Approved that the date for announcement of voting results for the 2021 Provincial Executive Council general election will be March 12, 2021.
4. Established, effective Sept. 1, 2020, a unified program area to undertake the functions of the Teacher Welfare and Member Services program areas and disbanded, effective Sept. 1, 2020, the Teacher Welfare and Member Services program areas, with staff and budget lines allocated to the unified program area.
5. Approved the draft Association calendars for 2020/21, and provisionally approved the draft Association calendars for 2021/22 and 2022/23, for finalization following the 2020 Annual Representative Assembly.
6. Amended the administrative guidelines to prohibit alcohol during Association events, conferences and meetings where cultural protocols and items are included (i.e., Elder blessing, powwow and round dance drums, dancers, eagle feathers and ceremonial pipes).
7. Authorized staff to study and report back to Council on options, location, cost and upkeep to install the Treaty 6 flag and the Métis flag at Barnett House alongside the Canadian flag.


8. Approved the proposed list of central and local matters as the Association’s initial proposal for list bargaining.
9. In accordance with section 31(2) of the *Teaching Profession Act*, approved an extension to the time period to commence a hearing.
10. Received the report of a hearing committee that found a teacher guilty of 10 charges of unprofessional conduct for failing to treat students with dignity and respect and be considerate of their circumstances and failing to maintain the honour and dignity of the profession.
The committee heard that the teacher engaged in texting and/or other electronic communications with students or former students shortly after their graduation and that the comments made were inappropriate to an acceptable teacher–student relationship. The teacher also engaged in a grooming-type activity with one or more current students or former students shortly after their graduation, and had sexual relationships with one or more students while they were still students or shortly after graduation.
The hearing committee imposed penalties to cover all 10 charges of a letter of severe reprimand, a fine of \$2,500, a declaration that the teacher is permanently ineligible for membership in the Association and a recommendation to the minister of education that the teacher’s teaching certificate be cancelled.
11. Received the report of a hearing committee that found a teacher guilty of two charges of unprofessional conduct for criticizing the professional competence of a teacher, in a manner contrary to article 13 of the Code of Professional Conduct, and for failing to treat a pupil or pupils with dignity and respect and be considerate of their circumstances by making an announcement using the school’s public address system to direct a group of students back to class and stating that they were failing the class. The hearing committee imposed a single letter of reprimand to address both charges.

12. Received the report of a hearing committee that found a teacher guilty of nine charges of unprofessional conduct for failing to act in a manner that maintains the honour and dignity of the profession and failing to act in a manner that treats students with dignity and respect and without consideration of the students’ circumstances.
The committee heard that the teacher engaged in electronic communications with a student and engaged in a social relationship with a student that involved kissing the student in the presence of other students and behind closed doors in the teacher’s classroom. The teacher also engaged in physical contact with the student in the presence of other students and misrepresented the relationship to several colleagues, leading to at least one colleague supporting the teacher in conversation with parents.
The hearing committee imposed penalties to cover all nine charges of a letter of severe reprimand, a declaration that the teacher is permanently ineligible for membership in the Alberta Teachers’ Association and a recommendation to the minister of education that the teacher’s teaching certificate be cancelled.
13. Approved amendments to the administrative guidelines in relation to online convention exhibitor directories and convention registration for Associate members and certain non-members.
14. Amended the *Standard Constitution for Convention Associations* and the nine convention association constitutions to align with convention-related amendments to the administrative guidelines.
15. Allocated \$10,000 from contingency for the administration of convention attendance requests for 2020/21.
16. Approved two electoral ballots and their explanatory notes for distribution to the membership in the fall and consideration at the 2021 Annual Representative Assembly.
17. Approved 13 grant applications to receive a Diversity, Equity and

- Human Rights grant, which support innovative projects that build inclusive learning communities and promote the principles of diversity, equity and human rights.
18. Approved the names of two teachers for addition to the Association instructor name bank, three teachers for addition to the Association administrator instructors name bank and one teacher for addition to the Indigenous Education Professional Development Facilitator Corps name bank.
 19. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, authorized that the Finland–Alberta Research Partnership (FINAL) and Alberta–Iceland International Research Partnership (ALICE) be moved to virtual summits and local educational development projects for the 2020/21 school year, with funding reduced to \$2,500 per school per annum. Council also extended the project to a fourth year (2021/22), when international travel and home/billet exchanges are more feasible, with funding reinstated to \$5,000 per school for the final project year.
 20. Approved amendments to the frame of reference for the Finance Committee and the frame of reference for the Christ the Redeemer Catholic Separate School Division Teacher Welfare Committee.
 21. Approved field member committee and representation assignments for 2020/21.
- ### Highlights of the Provincial Executive Council meeting held June 19, 2020, via Zoom
22. Populated two staff selection committees for the positions of associate co-ordinator, collective bargaining, and associate co-ordinator, professional discipline.
 23. Disbanded with thanks the Committee on Council Election Processes and the Committee on Understanding Aggression(s) in Alberta Schools and School Communities. ■



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You don't have to be perfect

Advocacy is hard work. It takes time and often it seems like nothing will ever change. In my president’s address at our first ever virtual Annual Representative Assembly I noted that, after we learned that the government would be hijacking our pension fund, we witnessed one of the largest political engagement activities undertaken by active and retired teachers. Since October, hundreds of letters, phone calls and visits to MLAs across the province, combined with tens of thousands of emails, have tried to persuade the government to reverse its decision, a decision that was made without any

consultation with the Alberta Teachers’ Association or the Alberta Teachers Retirement Fund.
The government heard your voices, but they didn’t listen, which tells me more about their ethics than your advocacy. On July 6, I attended the Standing Committee on Private Members Bills to watch the deliberations of MLAs on Bill 203, a private members bill that would have MLAs actually debate Bill 22 (the one that legislated the change in teachers’ pension investment managers). This standing committee meeting occurred almost nine months after the pension fund news emerged.

Nine months is a long time when you consider that most news stories cycle in and out of people’s perceptions in a week or so.
The fact that teachers were able to keep the pressure on MLAs for such a long stretch is quite simply impressive and is a testament to your advocacy. One of the hardest parts of advocacy is that you don’t always get what you want; that can be defeating and discouraging. But when you’re advocating for something you value, you keep pushing forward. As comedian Candy Palmater said, “You don’t have to be perfect, you just have to be persistent.” ■

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



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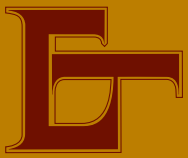
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ARA in Zoom Behind the scenes of the ATA's first virtual ARA

ATA News Staff

The ATA's 103rd Annual Representative Assembly took place Aug. 13 and 14 via Zoom. It was the first time in the organization's history that the event (the ATA equivalent of an annual general meeting) did not take place in person.

Event planners started testing processes with Bargaining Unit General Meetings throughout the province in May and June. Various pieces of the process and technology received dry runs in July and early August. During the two-day event, just like every year, delegates spent dozens of hours discussing and debating dozens of issues.

"It was extremely complex," said organizer and moderator Sharon Vogrinetz. "There were a lot of moving parts and some decisions had to be made on the fly to address issues as they arose."

Virtual reality

The first priority for ARA organizers was to ensure that, in a virtual world, ARA still functioned in a legal and transparent manner that allowed delegates to engage in the business of the Association.

Within the Zoom Webinar platform that was used, registered voting delegates were kept separate from others like staff and observers by designating them as "attendees" and others as "panellists." Panellists did not have access to certain features like voting hands.



Face masks, green screens, and computers set up at physically distanced stations were the norm at Barnett House for ARA 2020. PAT MAH

Here's a snapshot of what was involved in mounting this unprecedented event:

10

teams actively spent weeks planning for the event at Barnett House

20

weeks spent planning

32

staff working at Barnett House to mount the event

21

staff working at home to support the event

7

dry runs held during the two weeks prior to ARA

Virtual attendance:

419

voting delegates

19

PEC members

44

observers

Virtual vs in-person ARA – how it works

Virtual	In-person
When they wish to speak, delegates raise their virtual hand. The moderator notes the delegate's number, notifies the chair who is next in the queue and activates their microphone. The chair then recognizes the delegate.	Microphones are strategically placed throughout the ballroom. Whenever a delegate wishes to speak, they stand at a microphone, where they will be noticed and officially recognized by the chair.
Delegates vote by raising their virtual hands in the Zoom platform. The program automatically tallies the number of votes that are registered.	Delegates vote by raising the coloured card that they are issued upon registration. The chair assesses whether a vote is won (the yeas win) or lost by estimating which option drew the greater number of cards.
Staff mark down the number of yeas, then the number of nays. There is no need for division of the house since all votes are accurately counted from the outset.	If there's any doubt, someone calls for division of the house. Delegates vote again and staff members physically count the number of cards being held in the air.
In Zoom, when a delegate votes, a blue hand appears beside their name, so individual votes are visible to all delegates, as are the number of hands being raised, thereby mimicking the experience of being in the room during an in-person ARA.	Delegates in the room can see how their colleagues are voting and which way the vote appears to be going by the number of cards being held up by those for and those against each resolution.

“While it was not the same as an in-person ARA, I think the key goals were met: delegates were able to debate, amend and vote on resolutions and the budget. It felt like ARA.”

– Sharon Vogrinetz, moderator and organizer



A compilation of delegates from Edmonton Public Local No. 37. SUBMITTED



SUBMITTED BY STURGEON LOCAL NO. 27
ATA president Jason Schilling appears on a delegate's screen during ARA 2020.



SUBMITTED
Jonathan Sharek of Edmonton Catholic Local No. 54 attends ARA from his home.