



Keep your hats on...

for mental health on May 6 | [See page 6.](#)

SURVEY

ATA seeks input

Share your thoughts on central table bargaining

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# ATA NEWS

April 21, 2026 | Volume 60, Number 12

News Publication of The Alberta Teachers' Association



SUPPLIED

Salisbury Composite High hosted the 2026 Alberta Provincial Debate Championships, April 10-11, with 120 junior and senior high students taking part. Salisbury Composite teachers who supported the event included (from left to right) Peter Stamatopolous, Joe Tomkins and Jenna Willman.



## "A grab-bag of amendments"

ATA raises concerns over Bill 25

[See page 4.](#)



## The age of misinformation

Credibility and accountability still matter

[See Editorial, page 2.](#)



## Flag? What flag?

What to know about being "flagged" by the Registrar

[See Q&A, page 2.](#)

## Safety measures

Province announces funding to enhance school safety

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## Reset and recharge

How teachers spent their spring (or second winter?) break

[See Tale End, page 12.](#)



## In an age of misinformation, credibility still matters



### EDITORIAL

**Kristine Wilkinson**  
ATA News  
Editor-in-Chief

Do students in Denmark start school at age 7? Is Sweden powered solely by vast fields of solar panels? Maybe—or maybe not. Yet there's a lot on social media telling me these are true.

Few things are as frustrating as watching misinformation spread faster than truth. We see this daily, sometimes even from trusted friends and family. Social media has given us unprecedented access to information, but it has also removed many of the guardrails that once helped people distinguish fact from speculation, evidence from opinion and expertise from noise. Increasingly, it can feel difficult to trust what we see. Even the most carefully researched facts can be drowned out by viral posts, anonymous accounts and algorithms that reward outrage over accuracy. I encounter this every day while monitoring social media for the ATA.

This challenge is not unique to

teachers, education or even Canada. It is a global issue. I was recently fortunate to hear leaders from around the world speak candidly about misinformation and polarization within their own organizations and jurisdictions, from Interpol to the government of Slovenia. Despite the differing contexts, the challenges they described with misinformation closely mirror what we see here in Alberta. Even with differences in geography,

political systems and professional sectors, the conclusions were remarkably consistent: there is no shortcut and no silver bullet. The most effective response to misinformation is the steady, transparent and persistent sharing of accurate, appropriate information.

That philosophy guides the work of the ATA communications team. We maintain our role as a trusted source of information for members and the public—not by reacting impulsively to every online provocation, but by grounding our work in evidence, context and clarity. We do not engage in knee-jerk reactions to internet trolls or the latest AI-generated distortions. While such responses may feel justified in the moment, they

and the public can access reliable, timely information from a source that is accountable. When people are overwhelmed by conflicting narratives, credibility becomes currency, and credibility is built through consistency.

This does not mean ignoring the realities of the digital landscape. AI-generated content, manipulated media and anonymous disinformation networks are now permanent features of online spaces. But responding to them does not require panic. It requires patience and confidence in our values, along with an ongoing commitment to transparency. Most of all, it requires trusting that teachers and the public are capable of critical thinking when they are supported with facts rather than noise.

Retreating from the social media conversation is not an option. The answer is not less information; it is information that is accurate, accessible and contextualized. That is the work we must continue to do. Not loudly or reactively, but deliberately, responsibly and with trust at the centre of everything we communicate. ■

I welcome your comments. Contact me at [kristine.wilkinson@ata.ab.ca](mailto:kristine.wilkinson@ata.ab.ca).

“ Social media has given us unprecedented access to information, but it has also removed many of the guardrails ... ”

rarely serve the long-term interests of credibility or public trust.

Social media rewards immediacy; good communication rewards intention. Rather than chasing every rumour or amplifying misinformation through response, we focus on ensuring that members

## Flagged by the Registrar? What teachers should know



### Q & A

**Dennis Theobald**  
ATA Executive  
Secretary

**Question:** I have heard that teachers can be “flagged” by the Registrar on the teacher registry. What does that mean?

**Answer:** Most teachers will remain happily unaware of their professional status until a job application, renewal of interim certification, change in position or move to another jurisdiction suddenly becomes more complicated. That “complication” may be a “flag” on the teacher's file, at which point they may find themselves embarking on a Kafkaesque adventure into the bureaucracy.

A “flag” is not the same thing as the report of a finding of unprofessional conduct posted on the registry. Rather, a flag is an annotation on a teacher's certification file held by the Registrar at Alberta Education that indicates that a potential concern has been identified. Flags are most commonly placed on a teacher's file when a complaint about the teacher has been received by the Registrar. Not all complaints will result in a file being flagged; instead, the practice is limited to those instances where the Registrar

has determined that the nature of the complaint raises potential concern that warrants alerting school authorities, particularly if the teacher seeks to change employment.

Teachers may review their status on Alberta's Teacher and Teacher Leader Registry, the government's public site that displays a teacher's professional standing, certificate details and certain disciplinary outcomes; and the Teacher Workforce Information System (TWINS), which contains personal employment and certification information. However, these platforms do not indicate to the public or the teacher whether a file has been flagged or not. Flags are visible through the TWINS Teacher Authority Validation portal, which is exclusively available to school division human resources personnel and can therefore have an impact on a teacher's employment prospects.

At present, the only way a teacher can determine whether their file has been flagged is by contacting the Registrar. A statement of professional standing, which can be ordered for a \$25 fee, may also show a flag.

Based on recent discussions with the Registrar, the ATA understands that flagging is not intended for every complaint or minor conduct matter. Rather, it is generally reserved for serious duty-to-report situations, such as criminal charges or matters involving potential harm to children

or others. The decision rests solely with the Registrar.

While this may appear reasonable from a public policy perspective, the difficulty for teachers is twofold: first, as things currently stand, a teacher will not be made proactively aware that their file has been flagged and so may stumble into difficulty. Second, the flag may be put into place before the teacher has had a proper opportunity to defend themselves and potentially be cleared by the commissioner's excruciatingly slow investigation process.

The presence of a flag on a teacher's file will prompt school division human resources staff to contact the Registrar, who may then discuss with them the circumstances that led to the flag. This can result in misunderstandings, delays in hiring, impacts on labour mobility and significant uncertainty. Some prospective employers, taking the path of least resistance and minimizing potential risks, will simply use the presence of the flag to rule out even considering a teacher's application for a position on the principle that where there is smoke, there must be fire. The ATA is aware of an admittedly small number of cases when allegations against a teacher have been completely debunked by the employer, the police and/or the court but, as the commissioner has still not rendered a disposition, the

flagged teacher has been rendered unemployable for months and even years.

It is worth noting that if you do wind up being flagged, the flags are not necessarily permanent, particularly in cases involving minor breaches of the Code of Professional Conduct. However, there is currently no formal policy outlining their duration or removal. Because flags are generally intended for the most serious cases, the Registrar determined that they may only be removed at the conclusion of the government's disciplinary processes.

As part of its routine advocacy and representation work, the ATA has raised concerns directly with the Registrar in cases where flags appeared to have been applied in circumstances that did not justify them. In some instances, ATA staff have been able to have flags removed.

If a teacher suspects that a flag may be affecting their certification or employment changes, they are encouraged to contact the ATA. Staff working in the Regulatory Affairs office may be able to work with the Registrar and/or the employer to resolve the situation. ■

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



# Alberta strong and free (notwithstanding, of course)



## VIEWPOINTS

**Will van Engen**  
Lawyer

On Monday, October 27, 2025, at about 5:30 p.m., the UCP government introduced Bill 2, the *Back to School Act*, in the Alberta legislature. As a criminal defence lawyer, I spend my days defending the constitutional rights of Albertans in court, rights this legislation deliberately set aside. As everyone reading this will know, the legislation forced teachers to end their lawful strike and head back to the classroom under threat of penalties to individual teachers and the ATA. The UCP, a party that prides itself on standing for individual liberties, passed this law fully aware that it violated teachers' constitutional labour rights. But, rather than justify their position in the courts, they invoked the notwithstanding clause.

You may recall that, at about the same time the UCP began introducing the bill, the Toronto Blue Jays and L.A. Dodgers began playing game three of the World Series. That game went on for a near-record six-and-a-half hours and ended just after midnight. Shortly after that game ended, at about 1:30 a.m., the UCP rammed through the third and final reading of Bill 2.

In about the span of an (admittedly lengthy) baseball game, teachers had their constitutional labour rights stripped away from them.

As the son of a teacher and the husband of a teacher, I am particularly sensitive to policies that unfairly target or impact teachers. I have seen the long hours teachers put in, not only during the school day but also in the evenings and on weekends, marking exams, coaching sports and helping students who need extra help. I have seen how seriously teachers take their role of educating the next generation of Albertans. Teachers are more than just educators; they are mentors and role models to the next generation.

The UCP did not stop with teachers and Bill 2. Less than two months later, in another late-night marathon session, they rammed through legislation that invoked the notwithstanding clause to shield three pieces of legislation from constitutional challenge. This time, the laws in question prohibited children from using the names and pronouns of their choice, banned transgender girls from

participating in amateur female sports and banned certain transgender health care for youth under 16. Once again, the government chose to pre-emptively insulate itself from legal scrutiny rather than defend these measures on their merits in court.

As many readers will know, the notwithstanding clause (section 33 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms) was included in the charter as a compromise between the provinces and the federal government to ensure that provincial legislatures had the final word when creating provincial law. Alberta's then-Premier Peter Lougheed was among a number of premiers who advocated for its inclusion in the charter.

Importantly, though, Mr. Lougheed believed that section 33 should be imposed only after public deliberation and discussion. Does jamming through legislation on a Monday when much of Canada was glued to the TV watching the World Series align with this intention of thoughtful deliberation and discussion? Aside from the limited debate on that Monday night, MLAs had had little time to review and digest the legislation or to consult with their constituents before debate on the bill took place.

In representative democracies, elected representatives are supposed to carry out the will of their constituents (a principle taught in social studies). They can carry out the will of their constituents only if they actually have time to talk to them. And this was no ordinary legislation. This was legislation that stripped Albertans of constitutional rights without recourse to the courts.

Canadians are blessed to live in a country with a constitutionally enshrined charter of rights and freedoms that guarantees a host of rights necessary to living in a

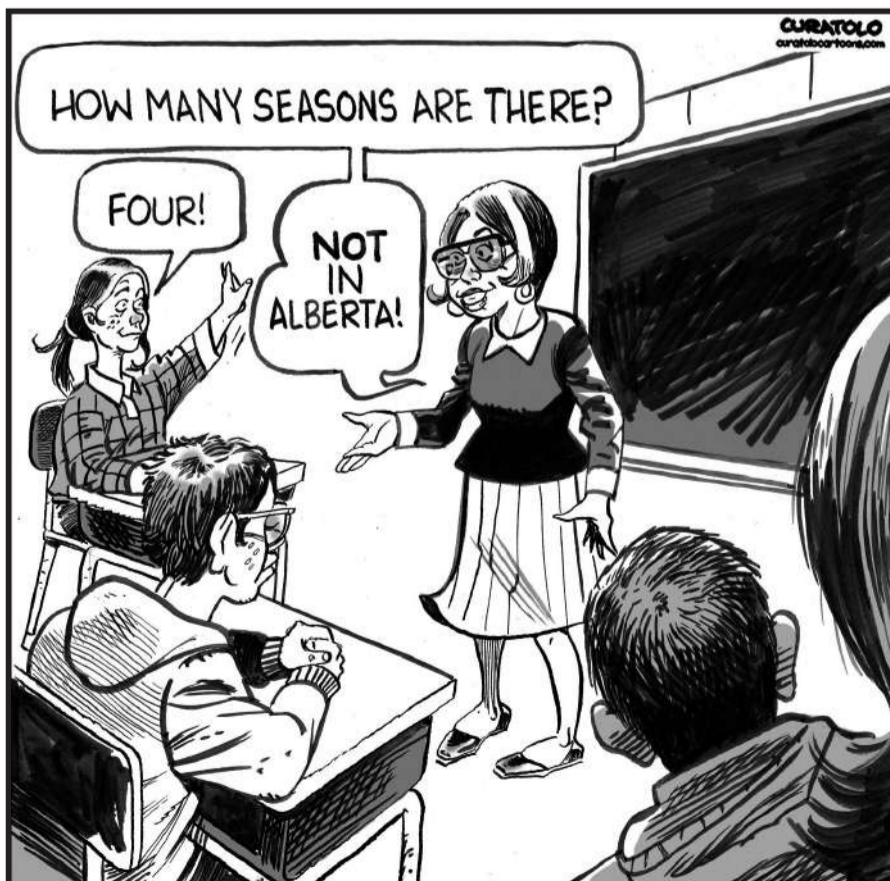
free and democratic society. That same charter provides governments the ability to pass laws that violate our rights and freedoms. The charter does not, however, protect those governments from the consequences of their actions.

The government lit a political fire in some of the most intelligent, organized and diligent professionals in the province. A government that believes it can get away with depriving its opponents of their political rights is a government that will continue to do it. And this government appears to think Albertans won't fight back.

Let's prove them wrong. ■

*Will van Engen is a criminal defence lawyer based in Edmonton. He has appeared at all levels of court in Alberta and the Supreme Court of Canada.*

“ In about the span of a ... baseball game, teachers had their constitutional labour rights stripped away from them. ”



## FOR THE RECORD

“ We also have a responsibility to those families to ensure ... funding that we are allotted ... is being spent to help the greatest number of people possible. ”

— Edmonton Public School Board Trustee  
Holly Nichol at  
April 14 board meeting

## YOUR VIEWS

To celebrate International Haiku Poetry Day on April 17, we asked teachers to share haikus on making it through the last months of the school year.

**Lindsay Hall**  
Approach each day as a fresh start, second and third chances for us all

**Alisha Shaikh**  
Reflect on the year,  
Rest from tests, quizzes and stress,  
Read for summer break!

**Stephen Moses**  
“Knock, knock” says teacher.  
“Who’s there?” asks trusting student.  
“Hike.” “Hike who?” They laugh.

**Larry Irla**  
Counting bell to bell  
the year drifts toward June light  
one calm step at a time

**Eugénie McCallan**  
Soleil d’été brille  
Juin à portée de main  
Un pied devant l’autre

**Sara Kowalski**  
Pencils worn to nubs,  
Voices buzz like busy bees,  
Patience earns its wings.

**Shelley Davis Forman**  
Enjoying the now  
Practice one day at a time  
The cup is half full

**Amanda Sawatzky**  
Space is heating up  
Do we have an extra fan?  
Time to learn outside

**Cassie Rapuano**  
Squirrely become all  
Time for classes filled with fun  
Sigh, standardized tests

**Morgan Brielle**  
Outside is sunny  
Try to keep the kids in desks  
Send coffee and help

**ATA Science Council**  
Take deep breaths and chill  
Grades, ISPs, friends and the  
Family, balance

**Tess Owen**  
Those sassy grade sixers.  
“The concert – do we have to?”  
(But, they do want to.)

**Gail Spidla**  
Laugh, laugh, laugh, giggle  
Clowning around quite a lot  
End each day with hugs!  
(I teach grade 1/2.)

**Julie Boles Gummesen**  
Plans to rise early  
For morning meditations  
Plenty of caffeine

**Stefanie Franceschini**  
Take the class outside  
Run and get your wiggles out  
Can I have a nap?

**Cindy Mandseth**  
Retire, love, retire  
Just can’t do this anymore  
Find a life again

**Kim Stubbs**  
Spring concert I said  
It will be so much better  
Whose bright idea?



## LEGISLATURE HIGHLIGHTS

# Education issues debated

Kim Clement  
ATA News Staff

The spring sitting of the legislature began on February 24 and is scheduled to run until May 14. Here is a summary of the education-related discussions that took place in question period during the week of March 30.

### Education Funding, March 30

Amanda Chapman (NDP MLA for Calgary-Beddington) pressed Minister of Education and Childcare Demetrios Nicolaides on Alberta's per-student education funding, arguing the government is still below the national average despite increased spending and asking why schools are not being prioritized.

Nicolaides responded that Budget 2026 includes a \$722 million increase in education funding, or seven per cent more than last year, and said Alberta is now above British Columbia in per-student funding. He also pointed to \$8.6 billion that was allotted for school construction and modernization.

Chapman then challenged the government's spending priorities, asking how many classroom complexity teams could have been funded with the \$49 million spent on the controversial children's pain medication contract tied to Sam Mraiche.

Nicolaides defended the government's rollout of 476 classroom complexity teams, funded through more than \$143 million, saying the teams are being sent to the highest-need classrooms to provide targeted student supports.

Chapman countered that 476 teams is far too few given the scale of classroom complexity in Alberta and then criticized the lack of support for Grades 7 to 12, saying the government was shortchanging students.

Nicolaides closed by contrasting what he called Chapman's "rhetoric" with the government's investments, again citing the complexity teams, school capital spending and the seven per cent education funding increase.

### Bill 25, *An Act to Remove Politics and Ideology from Classrooms and Amend the Education Act*, 2026, April 1

Leader of the Alberta New Democratic Party Naheed Nenshi challenged Premier Danielle Smith on the government's priorities in education, arguing that instead of addressing real problems in schools, Bill 25 focuses on symbolic and ideological issues, such as school naming.

Smith replied that the bill's main purpose is to improve school safety, saying the government wants to give principals, superintendents and trustees stronger authority to deal with students whose violent behaviour puts

teachers and other students at risk. She said students must be able to "earn" their way into and out of classrooms.

Nenshi then argued the government was using Bill 25 to strip inclusive language from the *Education Act*, pointing to the removal of words such as *welcoming* and *diversity*, and questioning for which students the government wanted schools to be less welcoming.

Smith responded that the issue is "violent kids," not inclusion, and cited classroom violence experienced by teachers. She referenced comments by Chapman about violence in schools and said the bill is meant to ensure teachers and principals have the authority to remove violent students from classrooms and get them appropriate help.

Nenshi then accused the government of using school safety as cover for a broader ideological agenda, including restricting which flags can be displayed in schools. He argued the bill is effectively about banning Pride flags and challenged the government to say so directly.

Smith did not directly answer that point, but instead criticized what she described as a lack of respect for provincial and national symbols among New Democrats. She defended the government's emphasis on the Canadian and Alberta flags in schools and said students would sing the Canadian national anthem weekly.

Nenshi closed by noting the contradiction in Smith's comments, pointing out that other flags are already displayed in the Legislature, just as they are in schools.

### Bill 25, April 2

Nenshi accused Smith of using Bill 25 to censor classrooms by restricting discussion of current events, banning certain materials and symbols, and making it harder for teachers to address complex or historically clear issues such as genocide, slavery, residential schools and authoritarian regimes. He argued that the bill undermines critical thinking, amounts to censorship rather than "back to basics," and raises serious concerns about how teachers are expected to remain "neutral" on issues of truth, justice and inclusion.

Smith rejected that characterization of Bill 2 and said the bill is about responding to parent concerns, restoring a focus on literacy, numeracy, coding and critical thinking, and addressing the issue of classroom violence that teachers raised through the complexity committee. She framed the government's approach as promoting patriotism and order in schools, including displaying the Canadian and Alberta flags and singing the national anthem, and criticized what she described as ideological or identity-based politics in education. ■

# ATA raises concerns about Bill 25's scope, impacts

Mark Milne  
ATA News Staff

The Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) is voicing strong concerns over Bill 25, *An Act to Remove Politics and Ideology from Classrooms*, arguing that the proposed legislation distracts from the real issues facing Alberta's classrooms.

Introduced on March 31, if passed, Bill 25 aims to strengthen safety and accountability in Alberta schools, according to the government. Specifically, it introduces several amendments to Alberta's *Education Act* to shift the provincial learning environment toward safety and neutrality.

"Parents expect schools to be safe, focused on learning and open to diverse perspectives," said Minister of Education and Childcare Demetrios Nicolaides. "These changes strengthen accountability, reinforce neutrality and respect, and make it clear that politics and ideology have no place in Alberta classrooms."

However, ATA president Jason Schilling has labeled the bill, which covers topics from flags to literacy to the national anthem to school building naming, as a "grab bag of amendments."

"We need to look beyond the clickbait title of this bill and drill down to understand its full scope," said Schilling. "It has very little to do with politics and ideology, at least in the classroom."

If passed, teachers would be instructed to approach the government-prescribed curriculum in a manner that is impartial, neutral and free of personal bias, while encouraging a wide range of perspectives—practices Schilling says teachers already follow.

"They're professionals. They have degrees in pedagogy. They've taken courses on how to implement curriculum," said Schilling. "They don't need their lesson plans analyzed, nor do they need to feel like they're being accused of deceitfulness in their profession."

Schilling also points to the potential for the bill's mandate of "neutrality" in the classroom to have a chilling effect on how teachers approach sensitive topics outlined in the curriculum. For years, he taught his English class the novel *Night* by Elie Wiesel, a Holocaust survivor, and now he wonders how he—or any teacher—could take a neutral, nonbiased approach to a topic like genocide.

"This new approach of neutrality is extremely problematic. We'll just have to see what the regulations are going to



CHRIS SCHWARZ/GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA  
Minister of Education and Childcare Demetrios Nicolaides addressing Bill 25.

say," he said. "Right now, when I press government for a definition of what it means to be neutral, in terms of this legislation, they're unable to provide an answer."

Bill 25 would also grant the minister of Education and Childcare increased authority over superintendent contracts and the naming of school buildings. New regulations would mandate the weekly playing of the national anthem and the display of the Canadian and Alberta flags, while restricting other flags unless specifically authorized by the minister.

Warning that this move constricts the expression of identities in schools and communities, Schilling says that whether it's a francophone, Métis, Pride or other flag, local schools should be free to reflect their communities without unnecessary political control.

"It is also deeply concerning that the government has purged the word *welcoming* from the *Education Act* ... and removed references to diversity," said Schilling. "Albertans should be asking why this government felt the need to make those changes."

Although Schilling acknowledged the bill touches on violence prevention and school safety, he said much of the language is vague and could create confusion and tension within school communities.

"To see them actually admit that there is a problem with violence within our schools is a productive first step," said Schilling. "But now they need to provide the resources and the supports to schools so they can actually deal with the issue and its root causes."

Schilling adds that, for a bill that claims to remove politics and ideology from classrooms, Bill 25 appears to do the opposite by increasing government control over decisions that should be left to teachers, school leaders and school communities.

"We will monitor the implementation of these amendments," he said, "but will not allow them to distract from the critical issues still affecting teachers and students." ■



### ATA News April Fool's Day contest winner

Thank you to everyone who participated in the fake ad contest that appeared in the March 31 issue of the *ATA News*! All submissions were entered into a draw for a \$25 gift card. The lucky winner is Riley E. from Wolf Creek Local No. 3.



## 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 Lindsay Yakimyshyn: [lindsay.yakimyshyn@ata.ab.ca](mailto:lindsay.yakimyshyn@ata.ab.ca).

## S U R V E Y

# ATA seeks member input on central table bargaining

Lindsay Yakimyshyn  
ATA News Managing Editor

The Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) wants to hear from members on central table bargaining.

From April 15 to April 30, Alberta teachers and school leaders will have the opportunity to share their thoughts on the communications and process for the last two rounds of central bargaining through an ATA member survey. With individualized links being sent to members, this survey aims to create space for direct and honest feedback.

ATA president Jason Schilling said member participation is critical to ensuring that the bargaining process reflects the profession's needs and that members, individually and collectively, can stay aware and engaged in matters that affect their future.

"Our strength as an Association comes directly from our members," Schilling said. "This is an important space for teachers and school leaders to share their experiences and help shape how we move forward."

Those who have not received a survey link from

## DID YOU KNOW?

Central table bargaining for teachers was established under the *Public Education Collective Bargaining Act*, which came into force on January 1, 2016. The legislation introduced a bilevel model, with central matters negotiated at a provincial table and local issues addressed through local bargaining.

Simply Voting are encouraged to verify their email address and ensure they are subscribed to ATA communications. Additional support is available throughout the survey window for members who need help accessing or completing the survey.

The survey is one of several ways the Association is gathering member feedback. A cross-section of about 100 members will be selected to participate in a focus group that will delve deeper into the survey's questions. Members can express their interest in participating by emailing [government@ata.ab.ca](mailto:government@ata.ab.ca) and including the subject line "Additional Survey."

This information-gathering process is being overseen by the Central Table Bargaining Review Committee 2020 and 2024, an ad hoc committee established to review the processes, policies and practices in place during the last two bargaining rounds. The committee—composed of seven teachers and school leaders and cochaired by an external labour relations expert—will review the research findings and report back to Provincial Executive Council later this year.

Member input is also being collected on an ongoing basis through meetings, conferences and events, including the ATA's upcoming Collective Bargaining Conference.

"Bargaining outcomes affect every teacher in the province," Schilling said. "It's essential that members see themselves in the process and know their voices are being heard." ■

### Survey support

Did you receive your Bargaining Review survey link from Simply Voting yet? If not, please contact 1-800-232-7208 for support.

# Province announces \$22 million for school safety

ATA News Staff

Alberta's government is investing \$22 million to enhance school safety across the province following the tragedy at Tumbler Ridge Secondary School this past February. The funding aims to strengthen physical security measures in schools and better prepare staff to respond to safety incidents.

On April 9, the province announced the initiative, saying that the funds are intended to ensure Alberta schools remain safe and secure environments for both students and staff. Minister of Education and Childcare Demetrios Nicolaidis said the province is taking steps to improve readiness and response capacity in schools.

"In response to the tragedy in Tumbler Ridge, we are taking decisive action to strengthen school security and ensure staff are better prepared to respond in critical moments," Nicolaidis said. "Safety cannot be an afterthought, and we will continue working closely with school boards to make sure they have the infrastructure, tools and training needed to protect students and staff when it matters most."

The new funding includes a one-time \$20 million grant for upgrades to school security infrastructure, which will be distributed to school boards based on student enrolment. Eligible upgrades include direct safety upgrades, which include locks and doors, security cameras and security camera system software, and indirect safety updates, which include intercom and public announcement systems and exterior lighting.

In addition, \$2 million has been earmarked for training on school safety for school leaders.

Government staff shared that the training will be geared toward school leaders, given their key role in emergency response and decision making. Of the training funds, \$1.75 million will be distributed to public school boards, while \$250,000 will go to the Association of Independent Schools & Colleges in Alberta to deliver training for eligible independent school leaders.

The investment in Alberta's school safety has been welcomed by several stakeholder groups, including Shali Baziuk, president of the Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA).

"We appreciate that public, Catholic and francophone school boards, as voices of their local communities, will have the flexibility to determine how this funding is allocated to support safety, security and emergency preparedness," Baziuk said in a statement.

Alongside the funding announced, the province stated that it will introduce provincial school safety standards for all public, separate, francophone, charter and accredited independent school authorities. The standards are expected to take effect next school year. ■

### School security infrastructure funding allocations:

- \$5,000 for authorities with fewer than 201 students
- \$10,000 for authorities with 201–402 students
- For authorities with more than 402 students: \$27.22 per student for public, separate, francophone and charter authorities (per-student amount includes funding for school leader safety training)

# LEADERSHIP THRIVE5

Bite-sized takeaways to boost and brighten your leadership life

Featuring: Alyre Morin  
Directeur d'école/Principal  
Elk Island Catholic Schools

### 1: Ce que je lis...



*Stop Letting Everything Affect You* de Daniel Chidiac. Dans un rôle où chaque journée apporte son lot de défis, ce livre m'aide à rester ancré, à gérer mes émotions et à me concentrer sur l'essentiel. Il met en lumière l'importance de protéger son énergie afin de diriger avec clarté, intention et équilibre.

### 2: Ce que je mange...



Gruau du lendemain (overnight oats) choco-banane. Rapide, riche en protéines et faible en matières grasses — et surtout, cela me soutient jusqu'au dîner (ce qui, en tant que directeur, n'est pas toujours garanti !). Les matins sont chargés, alors avoir quelque chose de prêt fait toute la différence.

### 3: Ce que je regarde...



tout ce qui me reconnecte au « pourquoi », notamment à travers le *Green STEM*. Ces temps-ci, je m'intéresse à de courtes vidéos et à des exemples de classes innovantes, particulièrement en apprentissage en plein air et en éducation environnementale. Ces idées nourrissent notre approche *Green STEM* à l'école et me rappellent à quel point l'apprentissage est puissant lorsque les élèves sont connectés à leur environnement et engagés dans des situations authentiques.

### 4: Les infolettres auxquelles je suis abonné...



*Think: Kids* (Massachusetts General Hospital). Leur travail sur le modèle de résolution collaborative des problèmes est extrêmement pertinent pour soutenir les élèves présentant des défis comportementaux. L'infolettre propose des pistes concrètes et fondées sur la recherche, qui nous amènent à passer de « Qu'est-ce qui ne va pas ? » à « Qu'est-ce qui fait obstacle ? ».

### Ce que j'écoute...



de la musique chrétienne pour la vie scolaire et la réflexion. En tant que directeur d'une école catholique, je recherche souvent des pièces musicales pouvant être utilisées lors d'assemblées, de célébrations ou d'activités scolaires. J'intègre également ces découvertes lors de journées pédagogiques avec le personnel, car la musique est un puissant levier pour créer un sentiment d'appartenance, établir le ton et nous recentrer sur notre mission commune. ■

Are you a school leader? Would you like to share your "Thrive 5"? Submit your ideas to managing editor Lindsay Yakimyshyn at [Lindsay.yakimyshyn@ata.ab.ca](mailto:Lindsay.yakimyshyn@ata.ab.ca).



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Wednesday, May 6, 2026 CanWeTalk.ca

## Hats on! for Mental Health

Wear a special hat to school to raise awareness of the importance of good mental health.

The Alberta Teachers' Association | Canadian Mental Health Association | Global TV

## Keep your hats on ... for mental health

### ATA News Staff

This is your unofficial invitation to break a rule. On May 6, wear a hat to school and encourage your students to do likewise.

Hats On! For Mental Health Day, the one day of the school year when students and

teachers are encouraged to wear hats in school, aims to raise awareness of the importance of mental health in our education spaces.

A partnership with the Canadian Mental Health Association and Global TV, this annual event runs on Wednesday during Mental Health Week.



Visit this page for downloadable posters, colouring sheets and social media graphics:  
<http://abteach.cc/HatsOn>.



Visit the CMHA website for mental health information and toolkits:  
<https://abteach.cc/CMHA>.

## Award winner

The graphics created to support and promote the ATA's Hats On! For Mental Health campaign earned a 2025 Branding Award in motion design from the Association of Registered Graphic Designers. The competition celebrates the best in branding and identity design from around the world. The animation was created by designer Michael Parillas under the guidance of supervising designer Erin Solano, who are both members of ATA staff.



# ATA ramps up advocacy against use of notwithstanding clause

Kristine Wilkinson  
ATA News Editor-in-Chief

Charter rights matter. That is the central message behind the Alberta Teachers' Association's (ATA) ongoing advocacy campaign against the province's use of the notwithstanding clause. The ATA has been both vocal and visible on the issue and is now intensifying its efforts.

Through public messaging and direct communication with members, the ATA is working to raise awareness among teachers, parents and the broader public about what is at stake when fundamental rights are suspended.

"Our rights were taken away, but we can and will continue to be vocal about the impact Bill 2, the *Back to School Act*, and the notwithstanding clause have had on teachers," said ATA president Jason Schilling.

As part of this effort, members and

the public are being directed to the Progress Not Promises website, where they can learn more about the ATA's advocacy and access tools to engage with elected officials, including a template letter to send to local MLAs. The initiative is intended to empower Albertans to raise concerns about the use of the notwithstanding clause and to call for meaningful progress on education policy and funding.

The ATA has also expanded its outreach to parents and communities through social media, linking teachers' working conditions to students' learning conditions. Messaging further connects teachers' rights to Alberta's identity as a strong and free province, underscoring the broader implications of invoking the notwithstanding clause.

"The notwithstanding clause didn't just affect teachers," Schilling said. "It raised questions about the charter rights of every individual in our province."



Check out the campaign's website at [www.progressnotpromises.ca](http://www.progressnotpromises.ca).

Advocacy efforts have also extended into broader public forums, including advertising and commentary on programs such as *The Ryan Jespersen Show*, encouraging audiences to reflect on core Alberta values and ask why teachers' rights are being suspended in the province.

The current campaign builds on momentum from recent strike action, during which ATA members played a

key role in raising public awareness about the challenges facing public education. Schilling said the ATA remains focused on holding government accountable for both education funding and respect for teachers' rights.

"Through this advocacy, the ATA is reaffirming that defending teachers' rights is inseparable from defending public education itself—and that this work is far from over," he said. ■

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\*NO PURCHASE NECESSARY. Open February 1, 2026 to May 31, 2026 to legal residents of Alberta who at the time of entry: (1) have reached the age of majority in Alberta and (2) are a member of the Alberta Teachers' Association. Odds of winning depend on the number of eligible entries received. Math skill test required. Rules: [cloud.information.belairdirect.com/40years-rules](https://cloud.information.belairdirect.com/40years-rules)  
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# Shared challenges, shared solidarity across Canada

## Off Script

with ATA President Jason Schilling



I welcome your comments.  
Contact me at  
[jason.schilling@ata.ab.ca](mailto:jason.schilling@ata.ab.ca).

I wrote this issue's column while sitting in the Ottawa airport awaiting my return flight to Edmonton after a Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF-FCE) board of directors meeting. I am grateful for these meetings and the CTF-FCE, which provides a national voice to issues facing teachers from coast to coast to coast.

As I participated in the meetings, I was once again struck by how many of the challenges faced by Alberta teachers are shared by our colleagues across Canada. Teacher retention and recruitment issues plague every region, with many of our colleagues reporting substitute teacher shortages, large class sizes and a lack resources for their students. Aggression and violence are also a national concern, with governments responding with a variety of approaches that range from

temporary fixes to sincere efforts to work with teachers on solutions.

The meeting also reminded me that bad ideas travel quickly across provincial borders. For instance, this week the Ford government in Ontario tabled Bill 101, which looks to reduce the power of school trustees and put that power in the hands of the minister of education. Sounds a lot like Alberta's Bill 25. Ontario is also looking to fast-track teacher credentials, just like what we will be seeing in Alberta, as the government here will be looking for ways to certify new teachers. The conversations around the CTF table allow us to share situational awareness and the approaches the other member organizations are taking to address current and emerging issues. Like every great teacher, we learn from one another, and the collegiality at the table is immeasurable.

During our meeting we also talked about the upcoming negotiations that many other provinces are about to begin. Many member organizations will most likely experience a difficult round of bargaining. As Alberta teachers know, governments are not so keen to fund public education in the way it should be funded.

During the teacher strike last October, I was immensely grateful to our colleagues across the country and their unions for the unwavering support during and after our job action. As our colleagues enter their own difficult negotiations, I know that Alberta teachers will be there in their Red for Ed gear to show that public education matters no matter where you live in Canada and that we will stand in solidarity with them, just as they did with us. ■

## 2026 gotcha! PHOTO CONTEST



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

Cash prizes available!

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



### GOTCHA! Contest rules

1. Photos taken by active, associate and student 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, 2025 and May 15, 2026, are eligible.
4. Please email photos to [newsandmag@ata.ab.ca](mailto:newsandmag@ata.ab.ca). Entries must be received by 5 p.m. on May 15, 2026.
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. Up to 10 additional entries may be selected for an honourable mention.
7. 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
8. Each entrant may submit up to five photos but no entrant can win more than one top-three prize.
9. A panel of individuals with photography, publishing and teaching experience will judge the entries. The decision of the judges is final.
10. Winning photographs will be published in the ATA News.
11. Photos submitted for the contest may be published in the ATA News, the ATA Magazine or other Association publications.
12. Please read carefully. Failure to comply with any of these rules may result in disqualification.

Get snapping and good luck!

COMM-65-1 2026 01

The ATA Educational Trust

## Dr B T Keeler Continuing Education Bursary

Application Deadline:  
May 1, 2026, at 4 PM



<https://abteach.cc/edtrust>

A \$700 bursary is available for teachers wishing to advance their knowledge and teaching skills by taking courses in their preferred subject area.

## DIGITAL NEWS



The ATA News is available online.

For the latest issue, visit [www.teachers.ab.ca/news](http://www.teachers.ab.ca/news). Subscribe to receive an email when a new issue is available. <https://abteach.cc/subscribe>

# “I’ll never forget my first coffee, gazing across Athens”

— A Canadian teacher’s first student tour



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## TGSE WORKSHOP FOR SYSTEM AND SCHOOL LEADERS

A two-day workshop focusing on principals' roles and duties as outlined in the *Education Act*, the TGSE Policy and the *Leadership Quality Standard*.

August 17-18, 2026  
Calgary

### REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN!

Active members—Free

Nonmembers—\$600 plus GST

For event information visit

<https://abteach.cc/SummerTGSE>



Scan QR code to register

For more information or to register, contact **Molly Garstad** in Teacher Employment Membership Support at **587-686-7321** (in Edmonton), **1-800-232-7208** (toll free) or [molly.garstad@ata.ab.ca](mailto:molly.garstad@ata.ab.ca).

# TALENT

April 21, 2026 | Volume 60, Number 12

OR SECOND WINTER?

# SPRING^BREAK RECHARGE

Teachers shared how they spent their spring break.

Driving around Vancouver Island and storm watching. This is Chesterman Beach during a calm moment.

– Patricia Gagnon



Dinner out on a week day!

– Annie Jacques



Four staff from the same school all happened to be at Costco at 10 a.m., lol.

– Tasha Fisher

I changed my last name!

– Kahleigh Rawlake



Appointments. Yay. Actually no, doing a movie tonight with my teacher besties.

– Danielle Black



Made it out to visit family in BC and spent a day doing the self-guided Circle Farms tour in Agassiz and Harrison. Aside from the cheese and creameries, bakeries and heritage sites, our favourite stop was Homestead Cider, where we sat by a fire, sampled some ciders and breathed in the mountain scenery. A gem of a place.

– Nicole Kealy

Took my son to the Telus World of Science before the Lego Jurassic Park exhibit ended. I don't know if he should be driving yet, though.

– Michael Versteegt



Portugal with 34 students

– Kristy Williams

Subbing for a board that isn't on spring break yet.

– Neil Sandham



Spring break or Christmas break? Spent the first day shoveling, AGAIN!

– Leanne Breadner-Rein

I am fulfilling a lifelong dream as a science teacher to go to the Galápagos Islands! Finally I get to see the place I have been teaching about for as long as I can remember!

– Amanda Green

Quilting retreat, finishing some projects, making time for me.

– Crystal Paige



The happiest place on earth!! Enjoying Disneyland with my family.

– Alicia Marie

