



The Alberta Teachers' Association

ATA CENTRAL EAST DISTRICT REPORT

by Murray Lalonde
District Representative

June 2023
Vol. 4
Issue 6



Another School Year in the Books: Here we are at the end of another school year. In some ways, it was an easier year than the last few have been: no masking, sanitizing of desks and gym equipment and anything else anyone touches, lost days due to outbreaks. However, this year has been a huge challenge with new curricula and no resources, new curricula in September again with no resources, provincial government takeover of the teacher discipline function, provincial budget that keeps public education severely underfunded (ranked 9th in Canada). As an Association in a provincial election year, we conducted the Stand For Education campaign to push public education to the top of the election issues from ranking 16th early on to 3rd by May 2023. Teachers saw the first salary increase in 9 years (1.75% so far, another 2% this September), but it's a far cry from what is deserved. There is a prevalence of mistrust of institutions (courts, medical system, teachers, monarchy, etc). We have seen the rise of populism and Deep State. Artificial Intelligence is writing essays that are now harder for teachers to detect online malfeasance.

In our advocacy plan for the 2022-2023 school year and in preparation for the provincial election, your association has used both internal and external resources to build a strong campaign. Strategic Planning Group heard from field experts, Bill Kilgannon and Susan Petrina. To battle it all, we need to play the long game while staying nimble and preparing to pivot. Former Minister of Education, Thomas Lukaszuk, told us to ask ourselves, "Who are your allies?" Our biggest allies are the parents of our students. While they know about the state of the health system (wait times/lists in Emergency, for MRIs, for surgeries), a lot of parents do not know about the state of education. Lukaszuk suggested we should talk to parents about education issues during parent teacher interviews.

continued...

Concerns? Questions?
Call or text: (780) 656-5952
email: murray.lalonde@ata.ab.ca
Website: bit.ly/molalo29

www.teachers.ab.ca
alberta-curriculum-analysis.ca
www.ibelieveinpubliced.ca

standforeducation.ca
[#IStandWithAbTeachers](https://twitter.com/StandWithAbTeachers)

Please Know that Your Association Works for You: The Alberta Teachers' Association is run by the membership. Teachers draft resolutions and vote to make them policy and make the final decision on the budget every May long-weekend at the Annual Representatives Assembly (ARA). Teachers guide committees (such as the Benefits, Insurance and Pension, Indigenous Education, Curriculum, Bargaining Advisory, Diversity, Equity and Human Rights, etc) to ensure that member voices are heard in all of our interests. Contact me anytime with concerns.

To summarize my year as your District Representative, I have attended:

- 80 Local Council and Executive Council meetings;
- 20 Local Teacher Welfare Committee and Bargaining Unit General Meetings;
- 19 Provincial Executive Council meetings;
- 19 provincial committee meetings;
- 12 days of conferences;
- 9 Endless Skies Teachers' Convention meetings;
- 8 meetings of preparation and attendance of ARA;
- 7 Local Presidents' meetings;
- 6 meetings of Canadian Teachers' Federation;
- 6 meetings of the Central Table Bargaining Committee;
- 5 days of ATA Summer Conference;
- 4 days of Strategic Planning;
- 3 teacher discipline invitations;
- and 1 Rally at the Legislature;
- for a total of 198 meetings over the July 2022 to July 2023 calendar year.

I have always listened to the people I represent and voice your issues and concerns at the provincial level. To be able to advocate for you, I rely on a strong base of family and friends. It is important that District Representatives know and feel the issues through personal experience, so DRs are all 1/2 time classroom teachers. My foundation is strengthened by my colleagues at H A Kostash School in Smoky Lake.

To my school leaders, teacher colleagues, and substitute teachers: this work could not have been done without your patience, understanding, love and support. Thank you! **To the local councils and its executives:** you make it very easy to look forward to each meeting. You work tirelessly for your local members and deserve a tonne of praise. You welcome me to your areas as one of your own. I cannot thank you enough.

Thank you all for everything you do for public education. Your students, colleagues, and public education as a whole are made better by your dedication. I hope you are able to find the peace, tranquility, and relaxation over a well-deserved summer break.

PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS AND ENHANCING PARTICIPANT SAFETY AND SECURITY AT ASSOCIATION MEETINGS AND EVENTS

The 2023 Annual Representative Assembly passed, on an emergent basis, Resolution 4-5/23 directing the Association to: "...develop, implement, and communicate policies and procedures to address incidents of harassment and/or assault at Association events and provide common language to subgroups for inclusion in policy."

The resolution was referred to staff for implementation, and a commitment made by the executive secretary that a preliminary analysis and proposed strategy would be brought to the June 2023 meeting of Provincial Executive Council. In response, staff reviewed documents and policy from several different sources, including Alberta Occupational Health and Safety legislation, the ATA Employee Handbook, the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF), and the United Nurses of Alberta (UNA). The following recommendations arise from that review and are intended to form the basis of the Association's policy response and strategy.

Policy Recommendation: That the Alberta Teachers' Association adopt the following Human Rights Statement with respect to all Association meetings, events, activities, and operations:

As an organization that promotes and is committed to respecting human rights and ensuring a safe, secure, and healthy environment for all, the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) works to ensure that all present or participating in ATA programs and events are protected from violence and harassment.

All ATA members are therefore expected to promote and defend the fundamental human rights of everyone engaged in ATA programs, activities, or other ATA work. ATA members are expected to treat one another with fairness, respect, and dignity and to uphold the highest standards of professionalism, accountability, competence, and integrity as representatives of the provincial Association as well as their respective locals and subgroups.

Furthermore, ATA members are obliged to act to prevent violence and harassment wherever possible and report to the appropriate person in authority any suspected breaches of this policy that come to their attention.

Presidents (provincial, local or subgroup) of the Alberta Teachers' Association or their designate is authorized to warn, reprimand and/or remove from a meeting, event, activity or representative role any participant whom the president or their designate reasonably believes to be in breach of the Alberta Teachers' Association Human Rights Statement.

Unbecoming Conduct of MLA Candidate: On May 17, after the emergence of the audio clip of Lacombe–Ponoka UCP candidate Jennifer Johnson speaking about transgender students, President Schilling wrote a letter to UCP leader Smith urging Smith to denounce the false accusations made by Johnson. In the letter, Schilling says, “these fabrications are part of a broader campaign of misinformation that cannot be tolerated and must be responded to with unequivocal condemnation. Spreading of misinformation like this—or failing to discredit it when it is heard—is not befitting of someone who would hold a position of authority.”

Calls in to Teacher Employment Services (TES): Teachers are calling for guidance on employment action, such as resigning, retiring, transferring and accessing leaves. Each of these actions are governed by policy, collective agreements and legislation. Interpersonal conflicts continue to be a source of significant call volume. Members should be aware of supports provided by TES, which include Healthy Interactions, one-on-one guidance and advice, and mediation services. Whereas the availability of substitute teachers has improved somewhat, it has not resolved and continues to place extra demands on teachers and school leaders.

Central Table Bargaining Debrief: Key takeaways from the feedback from the Collective Bargaining Conference:

- School representatives are the critical information conduits for members and must be better utilized.
- The perception of “my single vote does not count” when compared to the large urban needs to be addressed. Need to refocus on one big bargaining unit.
- The perfect storm of pressures (curriculum, the pandemic, discipline, etc) is making members feel the profession is going “downhill” and they need to have a “win.”
- Need to define and highlight the roles of CTBC better to ensure members know they have competent people representing them to build trust.
- Members need to better understand the bargaining processes and have resources available to support local conversations.
- The importance of face-to-face meetings and not letting efficiency trump connection. • The “temperature” of meetings needs to be addressed to ensure it is a safe place to express all points of view (the “yes” felt they could not speak up without being attacked).
- Members felt left out of the information loop and wanted more specifics before they needed to make a big decision for the ratification vote.
- The differences between rural and urban members is decreasing (members in both areas are now stating they are the primary income earners).
- Find ways to manage the information overload to help members better digest and focus on the critical items for bargaining.

continued...

Three areas emerged as overarching concepts from which recommendations would be made: Trust, Education and Information. CTBC believes that the interplay between and amongst these concepts are crucial to supporting members and locals in their roles as it relates to central table bargaining.

The previous “black box” approach to bargaining worked when members were better informed about the processes and felt more connected to them. Unfortunately, the central table bargaining regime creates additional barriers because of the structures required to complete the work. As a result, members feel disconnected and not in control of their destiny. While they do have the final say in the ratification vote, there is a perception that it was too much too fast. This also created situations where members were reaching out for information and the Association was not always in that space to provide it. This culminated in some members not trusting that the Association had their best interests as its driving principle. A more open and transparent communication model and information sharing have the potential for members to build that affinity toward the Association.

More Awards for the ATA: The ATA Magazine received a silver award for best illustration at the annual Alberta Magazine Awards hosted by the Alberta Magazine Publishers Association in May. Graphic designer Gela Cabrera Loa earned the second-place finish for an illustration that appeared in the Unsung Hero section of the magazine’s fall 2022 issue. Cabrera Loa’s illustration depicts Michelle Ranger, a principal credited with advancing Indigenous education within the Calgary Board of Education. The magazine was also nominated in other categories.

Two Association advertising campaigns were recently honoured with bronze medals in an international television awards program, the Telly Awards. The “Defend” advertisement from spring 2022 won in the Local TV—Political Issues category and the “Can We Talk: Paper Wishes” advertisement from fall 2021 won in the Local TV—Public Service Announcement and Local TV— Directing categories. These are the fifth, sixth and seventh Telly Awards won by the Association and Tag Advertising since 2018.

The Telly Awards annually showcases the best work created within television and across video, for all screens. Receiving over 12,000 entries from all 50 states and 5 continents, Telly Award winners represent work from some of the most respected advertising agencies, television stations, production companies and publishers from around the world.

My DR Calendar

May

- 3 - Battle River Executive
- 4 - Lakeland Catholic Local Council
- 5 - Greater St. Paul DEHR
- 5 - Northern Lights Local Induction/Retirement
- 5 - LPEOs Meeting (Calgary)
- 5 - All Parties Forum (Calgary)
- 8 - ARA 102
- 11-12 - Provincial Executive Council
- 15 - ARA 103
- 17 - Battle River DEHR
- 19 - Local Presidents Meeting
- 20-22 - Annual Representatives' Assembly
- 23 - Park Plains East Executive
- 25 - Park Plains East AGM
- 29 - Northern Lights Local Council
- 30 - Aspen View Local AGM
- 31 - Battle River Local AGM
- 31 - Lakeland Catholic Local AGM

June

- 1 - Endless Skies Teachers' Convention Meeting
- 2 - Indigenous Advisory Circle
- 5 - Indigenous Education Committee
- 5 - Northern Lights AGM
- 7 - Battle River Executive
- 10 - Benefits, Insurance, Pension Committee
- 12 - Park Plains East Executive
- 13 - Greater St Paul Local Council and Retirement
- 14 - Canadian Teachers' Federation
- 14 - Park Plains East Local Council
- 15 - Provincial Executive Council
- 16 - Provincial Executive Council
- 17 - Strategic Planning Group
- 21 - Greater St Paul Executive

July

- 11 - 15 - Canadian Teachers' Federation AGM in Ottawa

"Soulshine: It's better than sunshine, better than moonshine, and damn sure better than the rain. Hey now people don't mind, we all get this way sometimes. Gotta let your soul shine, shine 'til the break of day."

-Warren Hayes, *Soulshine*

"No one knew what they was gonna do, but Tchaikovsky had the news. He said, 'Let there be sound,' and there was sound. 'Let there be light,' and there was light. 'Let there be drums,' there were drums. 'Let there be guitar,' there was guitar. 'Oh, LET THERE BE ROCK!' "

-Angus Young and Bon Scott, *Let There Be Rock*

"I'm a new day rising; I'm a brand new sky to hang the stars upon tonight. I'm a little divided; do I stay or run away and leave it all behind? It's times like these you learn to live again. It's times like these that you give and give again. It's times like these you learn to love again. It's times like these, time and time again."

-Foo Fighters, *Times Like These*