



ATA CENTRAL EAST DISTRICT REPORT

*By Murray Lalonde
District Representative*

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"My shoes are wearing out from walking down this same highway. I don't see nothing new but I feel a lot of change, and I get the strangest feeling as I'm heading for the light."
- The Traveling Wilburys

We are already one month into the new year! So far, 2021 has been a much better year, as long as you remember that Minister Toews pulled that underhanded, loathsome, bully move of a Ministerial Order on our pension in 2020. More on this to come (page 3), but let's look at some of the nice things 2021 has in store for us...

IVAN COYOTE'S "EYE, HEART, YOU: POSSIBLY TRUE LOVE STORIES" - a FREE Valentine's Day performance (Feb 14 from 1:00 - 2:15) for 2SLGBTQ+ students and their allies. Please see <https://sched.co/h7JU> for more information and registration.

Women In Leadership (WIL) Speaker Series presents **DR. PATRICIA MAKOKIS' "A SYNERGISTIC APPROACH TO GENDER AND RACE EQUALITY"**. If you are interested in attending, register for this Feb 10 at 4:30 by visiting wil.teachers.ab.ca. The **Women In Leadership SUMMIT 2021** will take place March 6, and registration is done on surveys.teachers.ab.ca/s3/Women-in-Leadership-Summit-2021.

ENDLESS SKIES TEACHERS' CONVENTION 2021 - February 11 and 12. Although we are not going to be able to meet in person, I am really excited about this year's convention. I was able to participate in this year's Beginning Teachers' Conference, and knowing first-hand how well it went, I have no doubt that ESTCA 2021 will be amazing. Your ESTCA Committee Members have been working hard to bring you a fantastic lineup of sessions and speakers. If you register on Sched (estca2021.sched.com), your name will be entered for the door prizes. You will have to go to this sched link to view and select the sessions that interest you. Again, a huge thank you to Morgex Insurance for sponsoring the \$30000 worth of Zoom licenses for all Alberta Convention Associations.

Concerns? Questions?
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#WeAreATA

PEC Elections: I am humbled and honoured to again represent Central East teachers at the Provincial Executive Council, after having been acclaimed your District Representative. Jason Schilling has also been acclaimed as ATA President. Central East teachers will vote in this election, as three candidates are vying for two Vice President positions (current VP Jenny Regal, current DR Greg Carrabine, and Calgary Teacher Donnella Perkins). Please "meet the candidates" on the teachers.ab.ca website.

Annual Representatives' Assembly 2021 - May Long Weekend (May 22-24). Even if teachers will be vaccinated for CoV-2 before May, we cannot guarantee that the hotel staff and AV technicians will have received their vaccinations. Also, the ballroom of the hotel will only be able to hold 80 people, 6 feet apart. Therefore, out of safety for all attendees, ARA will have to be held virtually. Resolutions were due December 15, but we know that resolutions emerge between mid-December and mid-May. In order to place these on the order paper and to get a proper response, **emergent resolutions** will be due one week before ARA (this does not stop emergent resolutions from being first presented at ARA).

Also, for safety of catering, AV, and hotel staff, in order for ATA staff to start planning, **ATA Summer Conference 2021** will be held as a two-day, virtual event, date TBD.

School Leaders - we would like to know how much time you have spent tracing for COVID-19-positive cases, covering classes for isolating teachers, and other anomalies associated with the pandemic. If possible, please email both me and your Local President.

Collective Bargaining 2018-2020 - Four ATA Locals are, or until recently were, in strike position. Northern Gateway now has a Memorandum of Agreement! Wetaskiwin and Sturgeon Locals have voted in favour to take a government-supervised strike vote. This past week, January 24-25, Centre-Nord teachers voted 94% in favour of strike action, while their employer applied for a lock-out vote. However, they were able to reach an agreement on January 30! Félicitations, enseignants du Centre-Nord!

Finance - PEC approved the ATA Finance Committee's proposed budget for 2021/22. The budget is no secret, and with debate and possible amendments made to it at ARA, will be approved by ARA delegates. This year's proposed budget recommends no increase to member fees.

Advocacy - Your ATA has been lobbying Minister of Health Shandro and the Government of Alberta to give teachers, EAs, all school staff priority on the COVID vaccine list. We will be working with the largest population of non-vaccinated people, since no vaccine has been approved for people under the age of 18.

ATA Press Release: ATA to Challenge Pension Order in Courts - 2021 01 26

The Alberta Teachers' Association's Provincial Executive Council (PEC) has voted unanimously to initiate legal action against Finance Minister Travis Toews's ministerial order (MO) which reduces teacher control of pension investments.

PEC received legal advice on Friday that identified new avenues for a legal challenge as a result of the ministerial order imposing an investment management agreement (IMA) on the Alberta Teachers' Retirement Fund (ATRF) and the Alberta Investment Management Corporation (AIMCo).

"This offensive and over-reaching ministerial order, which negates promises made by government officials when passing Bill 22, needs to be stopped and we will turn to the courts to do so," says ATA president Jason Schilling.

Schilling says there are both legal and political issues at play.

"Teachers were betrayed by their MLAs, the minister and the premier when this imposed IMA failed to live up to their promises made to respect the ATRF's ability to direct the investment of teacher pension dollars," says Schilling. "We will fight the order in court, but there still needs to be political accountability for the broken promises."

Schilling encourages teachers and retirees to continue their advocacy with MLAs, noting the broken promises social media cards available at www.handsoffmypension.ca.

On November 7, 2019, Minister Toews said in the legislature that "AIMCo will invest according to the policies set by the ATRF board," but the imposed IMA offers AIMCo a veto on investment decisions that it has sole discretion to use with no ability for ATRF to appeal.

Teachers still hold out hope that the minister will honour the pledges he made earlier, says Schilling, and that on this basis an acceptable arrangement will be concluded between AIMCo and ATRF. But he says the MO provides AIMCo with a backstopped position that it is unlikely to negotiate away. The preferred solution is an agreement that serves the shared interests of teachers and government in having a well-managed, cost-effective and responsive teachers' pension plan.

Association lawyers are now working on the court application, which will be filed when it is ready. The foundations and basis of the Association's challenge will be revealed in due course before the courts.

My DR Calendar

February

2 - ESTCA Committee
4 - Lakeland Catholic Local Council
5 - Resolutions Committee
6 - Local Presidents Meeting
8 - Battle River Executive
8 - Northern Lights Executive
11-12 - Endless Skies Teachers' Convention
18 - Aspen View Local Council
22-23 - Provincial Executive Council
22 - Northern Lights Local Council

March

1 - Northern Lights Executive
1 - Battle River Executive
4 - Lakeland Catholic Local Council
8-11 - PEC Elections
9 - Greater St. Paul Local Council
12 - Election Day - results announced
15 - Northern Lights Local Council
15 - Park Plains East Executive
17 - Park Plains East Local Council
23 - Battle River Local Council
29- April 1 - Spring Break
31 - Lakeland Catholic Local Council

Please visit the ATA website (teachers.ab.ca) for:

- updates in bargaining (follow the Bargainers' Blog),
- information on PD webinars (time is your only cost),
- Speaker Series (Women In Leadership, Leadership, DEHR, PD, etc),
- News releases,
- Association Calendar, and more.

Please visit handsoffmypension.ca to join the fight for our pensions. Here, you will be able to find talking points to help you in your messaging to MLAs and in conversations with public citizens. Remember that **we are VITAL WORKERS**, as opposed to essential workers. The term "essential worker" is reserved for workers who are not legally allowed to strike. We need to be able to hold on to this bargaining "card", but hope that we never have to use it.