

Political Engagement

Take the Initiative—Individually and Collectively



The Alberta Teachers' Association

www.teachers.ab.ca



“ Never doubt that a small group of thou- committed citizens can change the world; it’s the only thing that *ever* has. ” Margaret M

What can I do?

➔ Educate yourself



- What is your constituency?
- Who is your MLA?
- Where is his or her constituency office?
- Do you know representatives of the other political parties in your constituency?
- Do you know how to contact your MLA?
- Does your MLA keep you informed on political activities?
- Do you know your MLA’s views on education?

➔ Make contact



- Always remember that your MLA is human and has feelings.
- Commending your MLA for something well done or some stand taken is important—your views count.
- Keep in touch with your MLA by phone, e-mail or letter.
- Keep your MLA informed about what you see happening in education—good and correct information is valuable.
- Raise education issues whenever possible.
- Try to meet regularly and, if possible, informally with your MLA.
- Try to attend constituency meetings, such as town hall meetings, and raise education questions.

➔ Keep up with political/education activities



- Skim newspapers/magazines/ websites from an education perspective.
- Listen to in-depth coverage of provincial political events on radio or television.
- Ask to be put on the Alberta Teachers’ Association’s e-mail distribution list for legislative summaries.
- Read *Alberta Hansard*.
- Decide that you are going to keep yourself informed on political/education issues.

➔ Join a political party



- It is easier to influence from inside than from outside.
- Be visible.
- Don’t have a one-track mind—education should be only one of your issues.
- Promote education resolutions at political party conventions.
- Get involved at the constituency association level.



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What can we do?

→ Watch



- If you have a single MLA, establish a small group to monitor the media and report on political activities.
- If you have more than one MLA, set up a small group for each MLA and monitor the media and political activities related to that MLA.
- Monitor *Alberta Hansard* either locally or through the Alberta Teachers' Association.
- Cover all local political forums and monitor education issues.
- Establish contact with all political parties in the constituency/constituencies.

→ Educate your MLA



- Arrange a meeting between teachers and local MLAs to discuss your work and learn about theirs.
- Invite your MLA to socials to meet teachers on a casual basis.
- Invite your MLA to debate with students.
- Ask your MLA to visit your school for a day and spend time with teachers and students.

→ Publicize education politics



- Send regular political updates to your audiences by e-mail or use a local newsletter.
- Post legislative summaries or notices of political events in schools.
- Keep local media informed about education activities taking place in the legislature.
- Meet regularly with representatives of all major political parties in the constituency/constituencies.

→ Hold regional meetings



- Get local teachers, teacher representatives and MLAs together regularly to discuss issues—ensure these are information-sharing sessions, not simply opportunities to attack the government of the day.
- As a group, meet with all major political parties in the constituency/constituencies at least once a year to discuss education.
- Meet with other groups with an interest in education to establish alliances.



Consider three things you can do this year to make a difference.

Did you know?

- Regular legislative summaries are available to any teacher from the Alberta Teachers' Association?
- A political engagement grant is available to locals to support implementation of a political engagement plan?
- The Alberta Teachers' Association produces a guide to Alberta's legislature, which is available to teachers free of charge?
- A workshop on lobbying is available on request from the Alberta Teachers' Association?
- Assistance in planning political activities is available at any time from the Alberta Teachers' Association?

Online resources

- Alberta Teachers' Association — www.teachers.ab.ca
- Alberta Education — <http://education.alberta.ca>
- Government of Alberta — <http://alberta.ca>
- Legislative Assembly of Alberta — www.assembly.ab.ca



Contact your MLA.



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