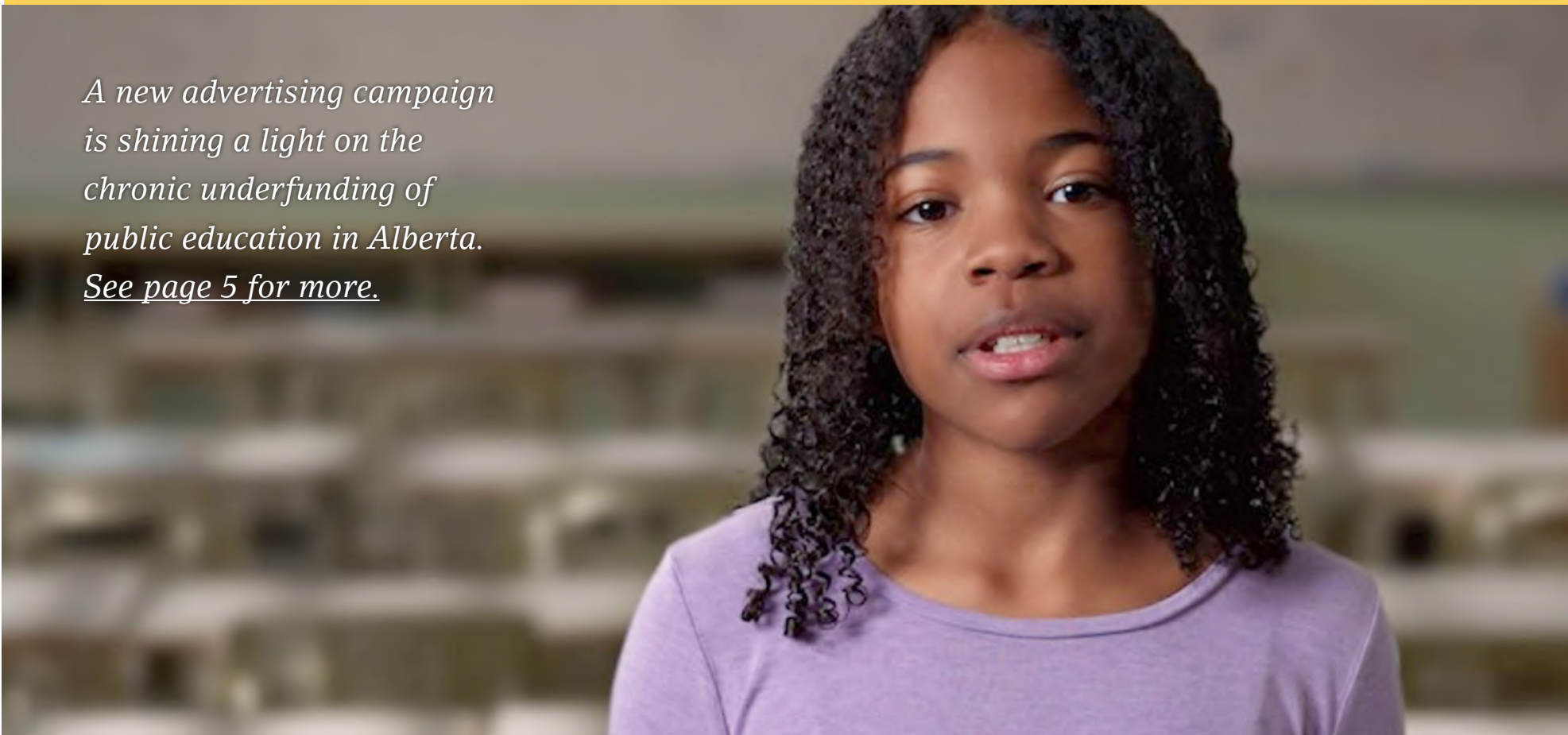


ATA NEWS

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StopTheExcuses.ca



ALBERTA TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

A new advertising campaign is shining a light on the chronic underfunding of public education in Alberta. See [page 5](#) for more.



Let's talk revenue

The government's savings plan ignores essential elements.

Read Jonathan Teghtmeyer's editorial on [page 2](#).



Vigilance and engagement

Analyst pulls back the curtain on powerful forces in Alberta politics.

See [page 4](#).



Off Script

Teachers' conventions come through again.

See [page 4](#).



Bargaining update

ATA prepares for central negotiations.

See [page 4](#).



New partnership

AMA teams up with ATA to provide special rates for teachers.

See [page 7](#).

Let's talk about revenue



EDITORIAL

Jonathan Teghtmeyer
ATA News Editor-in-Chief

A few days before her government dropped the 2024 budget, Premier Danielle Smith took to airwaves to talk directly with Albertans.

She wanted to tell us about the importance of getting Alberta finances off the reliance on resource revenue and her plans to do that. This is a laudable goal, to be sure, but one that has been talked about by virtually every other premier in decades.

Smith's plan is to grow the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust fund in order to ensure that income earned from the fund would be able to replace resource revenue, which will likely erode as the globe transitions away from fossil fuels.

Again, this is a laudable and prudent plan.

While some argue it is intergenerationally unfair to leave our kids with debt, I argue that it is also intergenerationally unfair to sell off our

natural resources without leaving them something to show for it.

I am not, however, convinced by Smith's plan on how to grow the Heritage Fund. She says if we keep spending increases below the levels of inflation plus population growth, then we can grow the fund as high as \$400 billion by 2050.

Overlooking the fact that keeping spending below population growth and inflation is a de facto cut in real funding, Smith's grand plan did not get off to a great start. Budget 2024 puts an additional \$2 billion into the Heritage Fund in 2024/25, but it gets that \$2 billion from the Alberta Fund. The Alberta Fund is savings from prior year surpluses, designed to help pay down debt. Ironically, the government is actually borrowing an additional \$2 billion next year and, coincidentally, \$2 billion is also the amount that oil revenue is set to decline next year.

This is sort of like borrowing \$20 to put into your right pocket and then passing it over to your left pocket to say, ta-da, look at all this money in my left pocket!

The truth is that without either making substantial cuts or significant changes to taxes, it will be very difficult

to get off the resource roller coaster or to make significant investments in the Heritage Fund.

Budget 2024 projects a relatively thin \$400 million surplus. The budget only balances by collecting \$17.3 billion in resource revenue. If we want to cut that out of the budget and make large deposits in the Heritage Fund, we need to have a big oil boom, dramatically cut spending or increase taxes.

Substantial cuts would be a real problem. Our education system is already the lowest funded in all of Canada. And health care is a huge issue right now. So why not look at revenue?

"Some say the answer is higher income taxes or a sales tax. I reject this," the premier said. "We only need to look at some of our fellow provinces and many US states to know that increasing these kinds of taxes to balance a budget is a recipe for economic decline."

"That will not be the approach of our government."

Here's the thing: there is so much room to move on taxation policy.

The budget documents show that Alberta would collect \$19 billion in additional revenue — and still be tied for the lowest taxed jurisdiction in Canada — if it followed B.C.'s tax scheme. It has

more than \$8 billion in tax room without even touching a sales tax.

The biggest tax savings are at the highest income levels. Families earning over \$300,000 in annual income pay \$12,000 less in tax in Alberta compared to B.C. Let's not forget the corporate tax rate either. That rate is about two-thirds the rate of most other provinces.

I reject the notion that adjusting tax on corporate profits and on the wealthiest Albertans even just a little bit would lead to economic ruin. It is ridiculous to leave any talk of taxation off the table.

When you look at our fiscal picture, which has long needed adjusting, it is clear that the real intergenerational unfairness comes from keeping our tax system irresponsibly low while we suck the resources dry and leave nothing for the future.

It is also intergenerational unfairness to not fund education appropriately. That funding should not rely on oil revenue, it should come from stable sources.

The revenue conversation needs to be squarely on the table. ■

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

Planned trans policy calls for varied response



Q & A

Dennis Theobald
ATA Executive Secretary

Question: I am very upset about the premier's recent announcement about trans students. I am concerned about the effect it may have on vulnerable students and about how it will affect me as a teacher. What does the Alberta Teachers' Association intend to do?

Answer: The premier's recent announcement is deeply concerning. Despite her assertion that this is just about protecting "parental rights," the policy targets a tiny minority of students for crass political advantage. While the "problem" that Smith is trying to solve is one of her own invention, her proposed "solution" will have more serious and broad effects. It will put at risk the lives, safety and security of transgender students while intimidating all vulnerable minorities (including members of the gender and relationship-diverse community), diminish teachers' exercise of their professional judgment, and undermine the civic virtues of respect for diversity and human rights that are the foundation of public education.

The Association's initial response

was delivered by ATA president Jason Schilling in public statements that focused on teachers' concern for the safety of transgender students and on their own professional and legal obligation to create for all students "welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environments that respect diversity and nurture a sense of belonging and a positive sense of self" [Education Act, Preamble]. Schilling stressed that teachers respect and encourage parents' desire to be involved in and support their children's education while decrying the government's attempt to drive a wedge between teachers and parents and to undermine confidence in the province's public school system.

Going forward, the Association's response will reflect several different strategies and approaches.

First of all, the Association will directly resist and oppose the policy direction announced by government. This we will do by working with like-minded organizations with the intention of helping the public to understand teachers' concerns and to mobilize popular opposition. An opportunity may also arise for persons or parties directly affected to challenge the resulting legislation in the courts, potentially providing the Association and other allies an opportunity to intervene. Although resistance can help keep this issue live in political

discourse, the strategy entails a long-term commitment with uncertain outcomes and so it cannot be our only response.

We will also be offering moral, organizational and material support and encouragement to gender and relationship diverse teachers, students and community members. The Association already has teacher gay-straight alliances (GSAs), locally and provincially, to bring teachers together

“Going forward, the Association's response will reflect several different strategies and approaches.”

to coordinate and support each other and to organize constructive responses. We are also committed to supporting diverse students in their schools and classrooms and have created and distributed related resources.

Although the policy announcement sets out the government's agenda, action in the form of legislation and regulation is still months away. We

will take this opportunity to work with stakeholders and the government to shape implementation to mitigate its impact on teachers and students and to minimize, to the greatest extent possible, intrusions into the working lives of classroom teachers.

The Association will also protect and represent its members who might be caught up in the application of legislation or provincial or board regulations and policies arising from the premier's announcement, in whatever venue. It is critical that any teacher who may be sanctioned by their employer, subject to a complaint before the Alberta Teaching Profession Commission or targeted for harassment contact the Association immediately for assistance.

The dark forces and influences that led the government to adopt this policy targeting a small and vulnerable group are likely to have still larger ambitions. We will, therefore, seek to protect and preserve other provisions in legislation, regulation and policy that are supportive of gender- and relationship-diverse students and teachers.

Finally, all of the efforts noted above, taken together will help to discourage the government from similar misguided policies and encourage it to support the principles of respect for diversity and inclusion that are the moral foundation of public education. ■



We must resist anti-trans policies



VIEWPOINTS

Avery Adler
SOGI 1 2 3 – Alberta Lead

On the evening of Jan. 31, Premier Danielle Smith shared a video over social media detailing new policies that the UCP government plans to implement this fall. Under the pretense of protecting child safety and parental rights, these proposed policies target the rights of transgender and gender-diverse youth, restricting the use of chosen names and pronouns and creating barriers to inclusive classrooms, medical access and sports participation. As the Alberta lead for SOGI 1 2 3, an initiative that works to make our education system more inclusive for students of all sexual orientations and gender identities (SOGI), I was filled with grief as I watched that video.

On the day following her social media announcement, Smith repeated her message in a [press conference](#). It was all very official. Many Albertans assumed that new policies had already been implemented, or that a specific bill was being introduced at the legislature. That's not so. In reality, at this time our laws and processes remain the same.

There is widespread consensus across legal, health, education and advocacy organizations that these policies, if implemented, will cause significant harm to transgender and gender-diverse youth. The backlash has been so extensive that a document tracking and summarizing all the open letters of opposition now runs [33 pages](#). In their [joint letter](#), Egale Canada and Skipping Stone Foundation declare: "The draconian measures announced run directly counter to expert guidance and evidence, violate the constitutional rights of 2SLGBTQI+ people, and will lead to irreparable harm and suffering. [We] will bring legal action to protect our communities."

Studies by organizations like The [Trevor Project](#) and [SARAVYC](#) have consistently shown that supporting students in their gender

identity is suicide prevention work; doing so increases mental health, social inclusion, academic success and overall well-being.

This announcement occurred amidst [rising anti-2SLGBTQ+ hate and disinformation](#) and is actually contributing to these as well. While no laws or regulations have actually changed, we have already seen a twofold chilling effect. For one, school leaders are falling silent about the good work they are already doing and are fearful about taking new steps forward. Secondly, school and division officials are increasingly worried about facing backlash for following evidence-based best practices.

“While no laws or regulations have actually changed, we have already seen a ... chilling effect.”

We can counter that chilling effect by looking at what the UCP has put forward so far: a social media post, an embedded video and a press conference. As teachers, you don't make decisions based on commotion in the media. You make decisions based on actual policy, actual legislation, human rights, evidence-based best practices, professional ethics and your own brilliantly compassionate hearts.

Premier Smith has warned us that a slate of harmful policies will be arriving in the fall. The specific details she shared created the impression that this is all very concrete and immediate, compelling those who understand the stakes to do something to mitigate the harm

that these policies will cause. But there's a catch: we can't respond to policies that don't exist. Until official wording exists, all we have are hypotheticals.

So, what can be done during this period of grim anticipation? As the Alberta Lead for SOGI 1 2 3, I can share strategies that have been discussed within the Alberta SOGI Educator Network:

1. Read your division's existing policies about SOGI inclusion. Some divisions have a specific SOGI policy, while others address the topic within policies on welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environments. Understand the existing protections for transgender and gender-diverse students in your division and be ready to articulate them to colleagues.

2. Learn more about best practices for creating SOGI-inclusive classrooms. Whether it's something small like stating your pronouns when you introduce yourself, or something bigger like creating a rainbow display, make a change before the end of the school year.

3. Start conversations about SOGI-inclusive education, including taking the time to acknowledge good work that your school or division is already doing. Don't let your support go unstated during this period of uncertainty. Stand proud in your values.

4. Be vocal about your opposition to the proposed policies. They have the potential to cause significant harm to marginalized students. If you don't know what to say, share an open letter that you agree with.

I want to end with an invitation for those who want to learn more about SOGI-inclusive education. On March 21, from 3:45–4:45 p.m. MDT, I will be hosting an info session about SOGI 1 2 3's approach, resources and the Alberta educator network. If you'd like to learn more, please reach out to info@sogieducation.org.

SOGI 1 2 3 is a program that aims to help teachers make schools inclusive and safe for students of all sexual orientations and gender identities.

YOUR VIEWS

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Teachers benefit from authentic, curious discussions

An opinion piece in the Sept. 19 issue of the *ATA News*, which ran under the headline "Teachers can help create schools where everyone matters" indirectly referenced a Toronto principal. The subject was Richard Bilkszto, who worked in inner city Buffalo serving a predominantly Black student population before moving on to work in Toronto. Bilkszto espoused pro-human values and believed in the merits of vibrant discourse.

In April 2021, Bilkszto attended leadership meetings with a diversity trainer whose claims raised concerns. In response, Bilkszto acknowledged that, while the Canadian education system still needs work, the supports for struggling and minority students are better and more equitable in this country compared with the U.S. The response to his statement, as reported by various media outlets, was unfortunate.

It's becoming more widely reported that training of this sort can be reductive and ineffective. To explore more productive options, I was directed to David Lewis-Peart. A former lecturer and DEI trainer, Lewis-Peart noticed that existing frameworks, while well intended, often fell short of producing positive outcomes and promoted ways of thinking that are unable to contend with nuance. Lewis-Peart offers two pieces of advice for moving forward: drop the emphasis on "anti" training (whether anti-homophobia, anti-racism, etc.) and instead lean into relationship-building and establishing curiosity and compassion in the diverse workplace.

Proponents of this approach include the Foundation Against Intolerance and Racism (FAIR), prominent workplace unity consultant Chloé Valdary and moral courage advocate and author Irshad Manji. Lewis-Peart is adding his voice with his work around the GRACE Principle. I recognize that these ideas resonate with the principles of pro-human advocacy, which I subscribe to.

The goals and outcomes of such training should be aligned with the greater project that teachers engage in. Some of the best PD I've had causes me to reflect and inhabit new ideas. Ideally, this leads to synthesis and eventually action to the benefit of students. We should avoid creating an orthodoxy, a place where discourse is stymied. I believe that a substantive way of reducing bias is to engage in authentic, curious discussions with a generous spirit.

Robert Piotrkowski

Ross Sheppard High School, Edmonton

Letters to the editor: We welcome letters to the editor. Please limit your submission to 300 words. Only letters bearing a first and last name, address and daytime telephone number will be considered for publication. Teachers are also asked to indicate where and what they teach. All letters are subject to editing for length, clarity, punctuation, spelling and grammar. Email managing editor Cory Hare: cory.hare@ata.ab.ca.



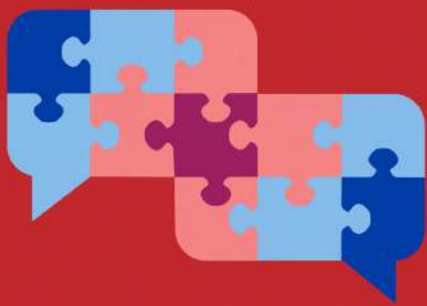
FOR THE RECORD

“This is an austerity budget, plain and simple. The UCP are ignoring the needs of Albertans to continue their disastrous record of cuts, chaos and privatization.”

– Bradley Lafortune, executive director of Public Interest Alberta, reacting to the provincial budget that was tabled Feb. 29.

BARGAINING

Central Table 2024



We are ATA.

List bargaining concludes

ATA prepares for central table negotiations

ATA News Staff

The Alberta Teachers' Association continues progress in the central table bargaining process, reaching an agreement with government and employer representatives during list bargaining.

List bargaining, the preliminary phase where parties negotiate which matters will be discussed at central and local tables, saw fruitful discussions between the ATA's Central Table Bargaining Committee (CTBC) and the Teachers' Employer Bargaining Association (TEBA).

During mid-February meetings, both parties finalized a list of all matters to be bargained at each table. Highlights from these discussions include a review of legislation governing teacher collective bargaining and the criteria for determining central or local matters.

Significant impacts on cost or issues common to most school boards are deemed central items, while others are considered local issues. The arbitration on list bargaining from the previous round provided clarity on criteria interpretation, allowing for more direct discussions in this round, said Sean Brown, CTBC's chief negotiator.

While not all ATA items made the list of all matters, agreements were reached on negotiating certain matters under already listed items. The preliminary phase of bargaining has now concluded, with preparations underway for central table bargaining.

The central matters survey closed on March 1, with more than 14,000 responses informing the data analysis currently underway by CTBC. This analysis will result in the creation of a goals and priorities document, which will then be reviewed by focus groups composed of members who participated in the survey. The aim is to ensure alignment between the proposed goals and priorities and the feedback received from members. Following this process, Provincial Executive Council (PEC) will approve the initial proposal. Central matters bargaining is expected to begin before the end of the 2023/24 school year.

"It is likely that teachers will need to take a strong stand to achieve the gains and improvements they are looking for," Brown said. "The solidarity shown by teachers in Edmonton Public, Rocky View, Palliser and Red Deer Catholic will need to be replicated across the province."

Teachers can anticipate further updates as mandate creation progresses, ensuring their voices are heard in the bargaining process, Brown said. ■

Political analyst urges vigilance and engagement

Kim Clement
ATA News Staff

Don't dismiss David Parker's influence on Alberta education policy.

That was the message delivered by political commentator Graham Thomson to attendees of the Political Engagement Seminar held in Edmonton on March 2.



KIM CLEMENT

Political commentator Graham Thomson addresses attendees of the ATA's Political Engagement Seminar in Edmonton on March 2.

Thomson began by acknowledging the importance of teachers' roles in light of his experiences observing education systems in other countries. He then delved into the web of political relationships and their impact on education policy in Alberta.

Central to Thomson's address was the role of David Parker, whom Thomson described as a significant player within the hierarchy of the United Conservative Party (UCP). Parker is the founder of Take Back Alberta which, according to the organization's website, is a "grassroots movement built to advance freedom and transfer power from the ruling elite to the people of our province."

Thomson emphasized Parker's influence on party decisions, particularly regarding education policy. Despite attempts by UCP officials to downplay Parker's significance, Thomson stressed that Parker has played an instrumental role in shaping party direction.

"He's friends with [Premier Danielle] Smith. They do talk," Thomson said. "It's not the case that he's just an outsider. She listens to him."

Thomson touched upon recent controversies surrounding gender policy and parental rights, illustrating how Parker's involvement has shaped the party's stance on these issues. He highlighted Parker's adeptness at leveraging both traditional and digital media platforms to advance his agenda, despite occasional rebukes from party leadership.

"He is a big deal. He does influence what is actually happening. They don't want to admit that though, of course, publicly," Thomson said.

Moreover, Thomson outlined Parker's strategic efforts to mobilize grassroots support and influence party decisions, including plans to influence upcoming leadership reviews within the UCP. He provided insights into Parker's background and political affiliations, shedding light on Parker's organizational skills and effectiveness as a campaigner.

"He's not just someone who came out of the woodwork. He's got a decade under his belt. He worked for Harper, he worked for Kenney. He helped Kenney become leader of the UCP, he helped get Kenney elected."

Thomson emphasized the significance of upcoming political events, such as the November UCP leadership

POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT
continued on page 11



Convention speakers deliver powerful messages

I am fortunate to be able to attend all nine teachers' conventions across the province. This year's conventions were another great example of world class professional development for teachers organized by teachers. Many thanks to our colleagues who volunteer their time to organize convention every year.

For me, the busy convention season provides a great opportunity to see many colleagues, but it is equally great to see some world-renowned speakers share their insights on education. Of course, I was not able to see all the speakers at all the conventions, but the ones I did manage to see definitely left a mark, so I wanted to highlight a few of my takeaways from this year's whirlwind of travel around the province.

At North Central Teachers' Convention, Chief Cadmus Delorme spoke to a packed crowd about how we cannot have truth and reconciliation without talking openly and frankly about the truth of the treatment of Indigenous people in Canada, past and present. Chief Delorme said that education is the driver of hope, that we need to work together to achieve all 94 Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. He also commented that when he speaks with people, he shows them his heart

before showing them his hand. The simple act of showing someone that you're a person first is a great starting place for any difficult conversation.

At Calgary City Teachers' Convention, journalist Anna Maria Tremonti spoke about the power of words and the importance of conversation, especially when dealing with misinformation. Lately, we have seen a lot of mistruths about what is happening in schools, especially around gender policies. Tremonti said we must continue to fight misinformation by offering the truth, even though this is difficult.

"The light is in the cracks, and that light will illuminate the truth," was how she phrased it, and that has resonated with me since.

During his session at Greater Edmonton Teachers' Convention, actor Andrew Phung commented that our words have power, that how we talk and treat one another can impact our lives for many years to come. He described the teachers who helped him along the way and said he learned from teachers how to be brave and respectful, how to listen carefully and how to be a problem solver.

Phung's closing comment left me at a loss for words and with a lump in my throat. He said that because his teachers fought for him, he was going to fight for us. ■



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 Cory Hare: cory.hare@ata.ab.ca.

Budget fails to meet rising costs, says ATA president

Jonathan Teghtmeyer
ATA News Editor-in-Chief

Alberta's schools will enrol an additional 57,000 students between this year and next, but ATA president Jason Schilling says the budget does not go far enough to support them.

On Feb. 29, the Alberta government tabled its 2024 provincial budget, which projects a \$400 million overall surplus on \$71 billion in spending. Government revenues are down \$2 billion from the 2023-24 fiscal year as global oil prices are set to soften into the year ahead.

The education budget touts a 4.4 per cent increase in operational spending driven mainly by 3.6 per cent increases to enrolment in each of the 2023/24 and 2024/25 school years.

"The Alberta Advantage is back and booming, and people from across Canada and around the world are once again flocking to our incredible province," said Education Minister Demetrios Nicolaides. "This of course puts added pressures on our schools, and our government is ready to help."

The minister said the government is providing \$842 million in new funding to help school boards hire more than 3,000 teachers and educational staff over the next three years.

The Budget 2024 three-year projections are a downgrade from the Budget 2023 projections. Budget 2023 promised \$1.4 billion over the next two school years, but Budget 2024 now pledges \$842 million spread out over the next three school years.

"Last year we saw what a pre-election budget looks like; today we see what a post-election budget looks like," Schilling said in a news release on budget day.

Schilling had set out a three-part test in advance of the budget. He wanted to see the budget fund enrolment growth, inflation and to add additional funding to repair the damage from years of underfunding. He said the budget fell short on the first two factors and did nothing on the third.

"Alberta has the lowest funded public education system in Canada and this budget guarantees it will stay that way," Schilling said. "As a result of underfunding, parents should expect program cuts, resource cuts, insufficient supports and even larger class sizes next year."

Dire data

Prior to the budget's tabling, the ATA released new data from Statistics Canada that showed Alberta's per pupil funding on public education was the lowest in Canada. In 2020/21, while the provincial average for spending was \$13,332 per student, Alberta spent only \$11,601 per student. The data shows that school boards would need at least a 13 per cent boost in funding to bring education spending to the national average.

After budget day, Schilling provided media with further analysis.

Budget documents project increases of 800 teaching positions and 875 support staff positions in the next school year, which amount to a two per cent and three per cent increase, respectively. Schilling says these numbers fall short of the 3.6 per cent increase in student population growth.

"What's the impact of not staffing to keep up with student enrolment growth?" asked Schilling. "Schools will once again have to crowd classes further and eliminate programs and services for students in order to redeploy staff elsewhere. What does that do for the amount of program choice made available for students who choose to attend public school?"

Schilling said this is far from the only time in the past 15 years that staffing levels have not kept up with enrolment growth. From 2010 through 2025, the student population will have increased by 33 per cent. Over the same time period, the teaching population has only increased by 15 per cent. This difference has left schools short the equivalent of at least 6,000 teachers over the 15 year period.

"Put another way, this is like a 1,000-student high school having 63 teachers in 2009 and dropping to 54 teachers in 2024," said Schilling. "Imagine what would happen if suddenly a school had to cut nine teacher positions."

Schilling says the principal in that school would need to drastically reduce program offerings, combine classes and eliminate a large number of supports and services for students.

"That is what has happened in our schools — not overnight, but gradually and consistently over 15 years."



ATA president Jason Schilling addresses the media following the tabling of the provincial budget at the Alberta legislature on Feb. 29.

Alberta ranks last in education spending

Figure 1. Per student operating expenditures 2020/21 (Statistics Canada 2024a)



Province	Per student*
CANADA	\$13,332
Alberta	\$11,601
New Brunswick	\$12,176
Saskatchewan	\$12,459
British Columbia	\$12,667
Ontario	\$13,242
Newfoundland & Labrador	\$13,607
Nova Scotia	\$13,623
Prince Edward Island	\$14,084
Manitoba	\$14,281
Québec	\$15,116

*The per student amount for Canada excludes Yukon, NWT and Nunavut.

ALBERTA TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

New data from Statistics Canada shows that Alberta continues to rank last in the country in per student funding.

ATA launches advertising campaign

ATA News Staff

The ATA has launched a new advertising campaign to help raise awareness about the state of funding and the impacts it is having on classrooms.

"We think that it is critically important that all Albertans understand what has happened in Alberta schools," said ATA president Jason Schilling. "We want every Albertan to clearly know and understand that despite having the richest economy in the country, we have the poorest funded public education system."

"There is no excusing this. Alberta students deserve better."

The television, online video, print, billboard and radio campaign informs Albertans about the bottom ranking for funding and outlines some of the impacts of that funding, including class size increases, eroding supports and issues with teacher retention.

Three video ads are told through the perspectives of students, teachers and parents. The tagline for the campaign is "Stop the Excuses."



Capital projects announced

ATA News Staff

Following the release of the budget, Premier Danielle Smith and Education Minister Demetrios Nicolaides visited St. Mary's school in Calgary to announce 43 new school projects to begin in various forms in 2024.

"Alberta is growing and we are investing significantly in education to meet that growth," said Smith. "Communities across the province will be seeing new and modernized schools for their students, providing them the best places to learn."

The announcement included 12 projects in Airdrie, Calgary, Chestermere, Cochrane, Edmonton and Leduc that would receive full construction funding in Budget 2024. Another 14 projects will get design funding and six projects will receive planning money. An announcement on the other 11 projects, expected to impact smaller communities, is forthcoming.

The government says these projects will add 35,000 additional spaces to help address enrolment growth across the province.

ATA president Jason Schilling says the school builds are not enough, and it just goes to show that schools will get more crowded, not less crowded as a result.

"The idea of 57,000 additional students in schools over just two years is astonishing," he said. "The government is touting new school projects that would add 35,000 additional spaces."

"The numbers just don't add up."



In Alberta, it is estimated that **3 to 5** children in any classroom have directly witnessed violence in their home.¹



BUILD

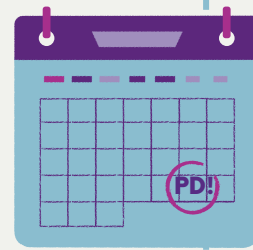
your skills to support the children in your classroom

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- Understanding Domestic Violence
- Fostering Healthy Relationships
- Domestic Violence at Work,
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ACWS' **free** online course helps people who work with children better understand brain development, the impacts of trauma, and nurturing resilience in those exposed to domestic violence.



Learn more about gender-based and domestic violence from the comfort of your own home. Order a free **Leading Change Expansion Pack** to build your knowledge and help you lead strengths-based conversations in classrooms and clubs.

Canada has a National Action Plan to end gender-based violence. We all have a role to play.

Lead from where you stand. Learn more at acws.ca

¹ humanservices.alberta.ca/documents/kids-these-days-family-violence-is-everyones-business.pdf



The ATA has entered into an agreement with the Alberta Motor Association that will enable teachers to access special rates for AMA services.

ATA and AMA unveil new partnership

ATA News Staff

ATA, meet AMA. A new partnership between the ATA and the Alberta Motor Association (AMA) launched on March 1 will enable ATA members to access special offers and services through the AMA.

Last year, the AMA reached out to the ATA about the possibility of entering an exclusive arrangement to provide travel services to teachers. An agreement was reached that sees the AMA providing exclusive supports and products for Alberta's teachers and sponsoring events hosted by the ATA.

Robert Mazzotta, ATA associate executive secretary, says that the partnership will benefit ATA members.

"There is no cost to the Association or its members for this partnership," Mazzotta says, "We see this as win-win."

Formed in 1926, the AMA is a non-profit membership organization that offers roadside assistance, auto touring, leisure travel and insurance services through 17 service centres around the province.

The AMA's offerings for ATA members include an exclusive ATA white label online booking engine for flights and

car rentals, vacation packages and attractions. ATA members also gain access to an exclusive travel insurance website to purchase insurance related to trip cancellation or interruption, travel medical insurance and more. Exclusive hotel rates and a new-to-AMA membership offer are also available.

Though the partnership between the AMA and the ATA is new, it's a natural fit, as the AMA has been working with teachers extensively over the years through its school safety patrol program, its new School Garden Studio program and driver education, said chief operating officer Joel Ruff.

"We've been working closely with teachers in Alberta for over 86 years ... we work with individual teachers and educational groups every day," Ruff said.

Lauding the efforts of the province's teaching professionals, Ruff shares his hope that the partnership will allow teachers to make the most of their time out of the classroom.

"We see all that you do for Alberta's youth, and this partnership is our way of showing our appreciation for you and all that you do. Teachers deserve a break, and we want to help you enjoy yours confidently." ■

Log on to learn more

To learn more about what AMA has to offer, visit the Members Only section of the ATA website, which has a unique, direct link for ATA members to access the benefits of this partnership.

Council prepares for ARA

PEC POINTS

Audrey Dutka
ATA News Staff

Highlights of the Provincial Executive Council meeting held Feb. 26 and 27, 2024, via virtual platform.

1. Approved 141 resolutions arising from the six-year review of policy for presentation to the 2024 Annual Representative Assembly (ARA).

2. Considered 35 Council resolutions and 38 local resolutions for presentation to the 2024 ARA. In the case of local resolutions, Council approved recommendations of concurrence, amendment and concurrence, nonconcurrence, referral for study and report, or action taken. Council further approved the assignment of speakers to each resolution.

3. Considered six specialist council resolutions and approved one for presentation to the 2024 ARA and referred one to Table Officers Committee for preparation of a resolution for the 2024 ARA.

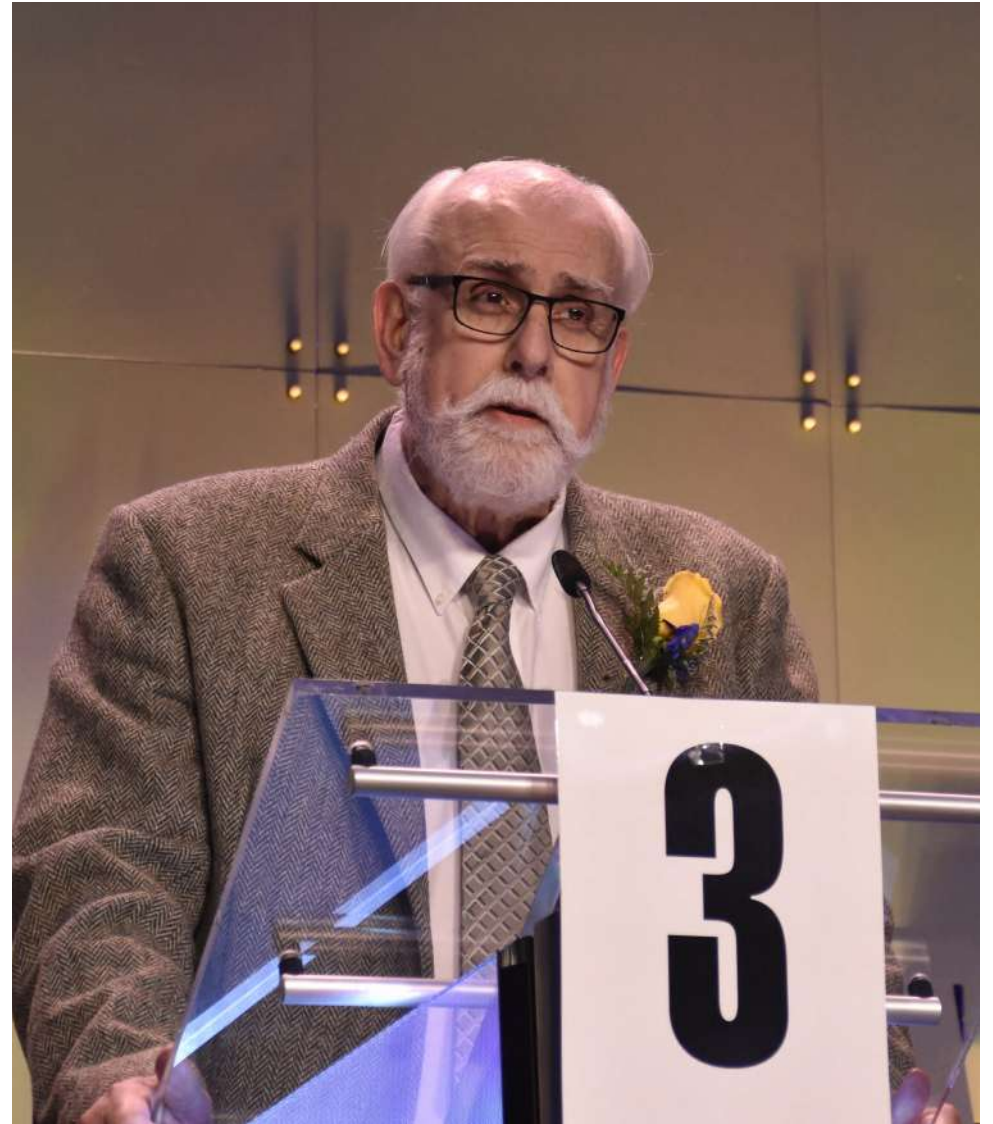
4. Approved for presentation to the 2024 ARA four resolutions put forward by Association standing committees and referred one resolution to Resolutions Committee for processing.

5. Advised Resolutions Committee that the Association's definition of school leader is broader than that of *principal*, *associate principal* or *vice-principal* and should encompass aspiring leaders.

6. Authorized all interested members of Council to attend the Political Engagement Seminar on March 1 and 2 at Barnett House.

7. Authorized all interested members of Council to attend the Association's Women in Leadership Summit on March 8 and 9 at Barnett House.

8. Authorized all interested members



Richard Rand, longtime legal counsel for the ATA, is being remembered as a great friend of public education.

Cancer claims longtime ATA supporter

ATA News Staff

A friend of public education who served as the legal counsel to ATA disciplinary panels for nearly 30 years has died.

Richard Rand provided legal service to the ATA from 1995 to 2022, providing advice at hearings of the ATA's professional conduct committees, supporting the orientation and ongoing learning for members of these committees, and advising staff on practice and procedural matters.

In 2022, Rand wrote in defense of the teacher discipline procedures that had been in place for decades and were being removed from the ATA's purview. In 2023, he was awarded honorary ATA membership at the Annual Representative Assembly.

Rand died in late February after a long battle with prostate cancer.

"Richard was a great friend of public education, the Association and of teachers," said ATA executive secretary Dennis Theobald. "He was a vocal supporter of our work, in all forums." ■

of Council to attend the Diversity, Equity and Human Rights Conference for locals on April 18 and 19 at Barnett House.

9. Authorized all interested members of Council to attend the NDP Leadership Candidates' Forum on May 3 at Barnett House, and approved an invitation to all local presidents to attend at their own expense.

10. Approved that the Association's nominee to the board of the Alberta Teachers' Retirement Fund be drawn from the executive staff cohort with the executive secretary naming one or more candidates for Table Officers Committee consideration and Council's approval.

11. Received the report of a Professional Conduct Appeal Committee that upheld the decision of the Professional Conduct Committee on three charges of unprofessional conduct and decreased the amount of two penalties by \$500 each.

12. Approved the names of two teachers for addition to the name bank for possible appointment as professional development facilitators and approved the names of two teachers for addition to the name bank for possible appointment as Association Instructors.

13. Authorized the Central Table Bargaining Committee to develop for presentation to Council a public communications strategy and budget to elevate public awareness of education and the need for substantial public investment in education.

14. Appointed Council members and local president members to sit on the Committee on Coordinating Communications to Members.

15. Amended the Teacher Education and Certification Committee (TECC) and the Area Field Experiences Committees (AFEC) frames of reference to allow student local members and an alternate to attend TECC and AFEC meetings. ■

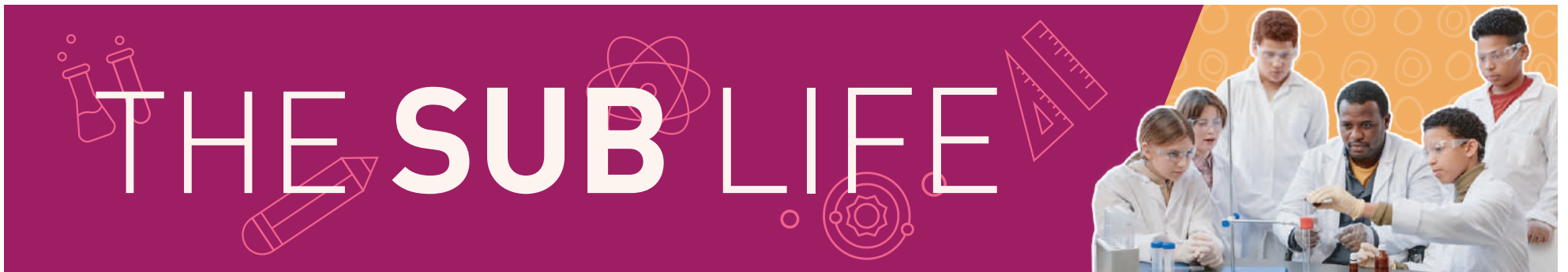
IF ALBERTA IS THE RICHEST PROVINCE IN CANADA, THEN WHY ARE WE SPENDING THE LEAST ON EDUCATION?*

*We bet you thought the asterisk would lead to some sort of stat that softens this embarrassing statement. Unfortunately, the truth only gets worse. The latest report on "Education Spending in Public Schools in Canada", conducted by the Fraser Institute in 2023, puts into perspective how poorly Alberta stands against the rest of our country. As much as we hate to reference the Fraser Institute, their study shows Alberta spent the least on a per-student basis for public education in all of Canada in 2020/21. To make matters worse, data shows that from 2012 to 2021 provinces like Quebec and BC have rightfully increased spending by 33% and 13%, respectively. Whereas Alberta has had a shameful decrease of 12% in spending over that same time period. When public education does not receive the proper funding, students' needs are not met. Classrooms are overfilled, diverse programs are being cut, and there is less teaching support for students with complex issues. The compounding effects of these issues have seen distraught teachers in our province leave their chosen profession altogether. It's time to right the wrongs. It's time for solutions. Tell your MLA, "Stop the excuses."

[StopTheExcuses.ca](https://www.stexcuses.ca)



The Alberta
Teachers' Association



Full-circle experience for retired ATA staffer

Cory Hare
ATA News Managing Editor

A teaching career can lead to a lot of interesting and exciting places, but nothing compares to being in a classroom in front of students.

That realization hit home recently for Mark Swanson, a retired ATA executive whose career has included stops as a school administrator, registrar with Alberta Education and education faculty dean. Retired for a year now, the Edmonton resident has recently taken on a handful of substitute teaching assignments in nearby Leduc. It's the first time he's taught students in a classroom since 1995, when he left a high school teaching job to pursue his doctorate.

"It's changed, but it hasn't," Swanson says of teaching.

What hasn't changed is the fact that students still need a great deal of support from teachers, Swanson says. What has changed — a lot — is technology and classroom complexity.

Back in the mid-90s when Swanson was on his way out of the classroom to further his education, the first Smartboards were on their way in. Now they are in every classroom. Every classroom also now has a phone rather than the intercoms that he remembers. On top of that, the students all have

cellphones and everything from lesson plans to seating plans is electronic.

Despite the huge technological shifts that have taken place, what's been most striking to Swanson is the level of complexity that is now the norm in classrooms.

"The complexity is really, really different," he says.

Pulled away

Swanson began his career in 1982, working as a substitute during a time when he felt lucky to get five teaching days a month. He did that for a year and a half before earning a permanent placement.

From that point on, Swanson's career was marked by progressive taps on the shoulder that pulled him further and further away from the classroom. The first tap came a few years into his career, when he was asked to consider becoming a vice-principal. That led to him teaching half time and doing administration half time. Then came a tap to become a principal, removing him from the classroom entirely. And on it went.

After earning his doctorate, Swanson became a director and registrar of teacher development and certification at Alberta Education, and then the education dean at Concordia University. From there, he was hired to be the

co-ordinator of the ATA's Professional Development program area, spending five years in that role before retiring in 2023.

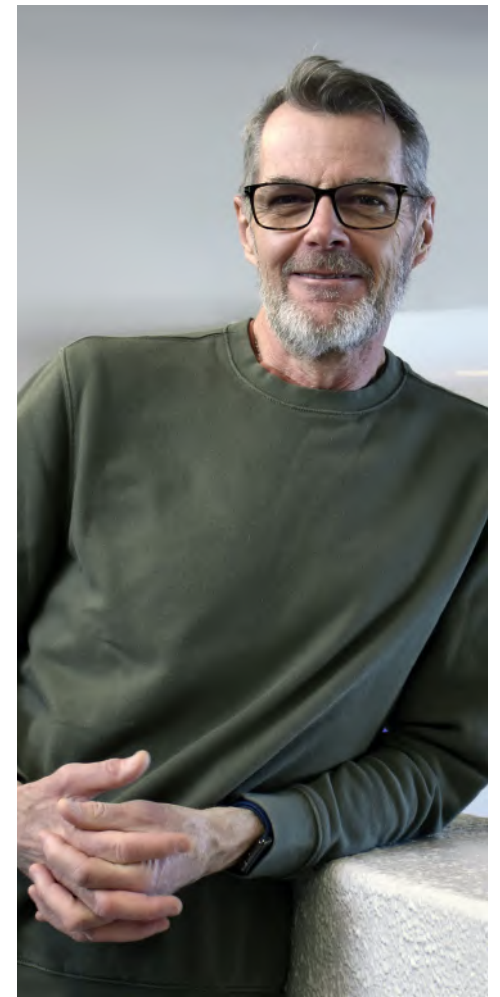
Now he's back where he started: doing his best to connect with students and provide the support they need.

"I didn't spend a lot of time actually teaching students full-time, but that's why I went into teaching. I loved that," Swanson says. "I want to finish my career doing what I love to do, and that's working with students."

His effort to reconnect with the classroom is also preparation for a planned run for the Catholic school board in 2025, he says.

Getting back to the classroom, Swanson says he's enjoying connecting with students and making a difference, even if it's on a lesser scale than if he was teaching full time. At 66, he doesn't see that in his future. For now, a substitute assignment a few times a month, when it fits his schedule, is sufficient.

"One of the things I really like is ... at the end of the day, it doesn't matter how challenging that class was, when the students leave, there are always two or three who say thank you," he says. "It tells me there's something really good [happening in schools]. It makes me feel good about the hands we're leaving this world in." ■



CORY HARE

Mark Swanson is a former ATA coordinator who is trying out substitute teaching during his retirement.

A stepping stone for some, career choice for others

In recognition of Substitute Teachers' Appreciation Week, the *ATA News* put out a call for submissions from substitutes on the following questions:

- Why are you a substitute teacher?
- Is it a stepping stone or a preferred career option?
- What do you find most rewarding about it?
- What is the most challenging aspect?

Here are the words of five Alberta substitute teachers.

Be prepared and flexible



I have been a proud substitute teacher for the past 14 years. At the beginning of my career, I tried to get a teaching contract, but no luck. I decided to embrace the sub life and have

not looked back. I was drawn to the teaching profession from a young age. My parents are happy that I didn't follow my first dream of working at McDonalds. My thought was, I get free Happy Meals every day.

I enjoy going to a different school each day and seeing what the day will bring, but I do love my regular classrooms, where I get to know the students and not call everyone kiddo

because I can't remember their names.

Do I wish for paid sick days and a health spending account? Very much, but I don't have to plan, mark, do report cards or deal with parents. Do I feel like I am taken advantage of or not heard? Sometimes. Does every day teach me something new? Oh yes! My heart bursts every time I walk into a room and the students yell, "Yeah, Mrs. Henke-Lambert is here."

What have I learned from being a substitute teacher? The two most important things are to be prepared for anything and to be flexible. One never knows what one is walking into when one steps inside a school in the morning. Which is why I have my sub bag, which contains many essential items and seems to get heavier every year, because I am always thinking of new things to put inside it.

— Melissa Henke-Lambert

Fun, varied and challenging



I walk into the office of a school I've never been to before and sign in, grab keys and scurry to the classroom they've told me I'll be in for the day.

I scan through the notes that have been left for me:

- Any allergies/behaviours to note?

- When is the next break in the schedule so I know where to focus my attention for the time being?
- What is the attendance sign-in password?
- Are there any EAs in the room to lend some insight?
- Where is the bell schedule, and how tightly do I need to be following it?

Thinking on my feet in a Grade 9 science class in rural Alberta, or an academic-focused kindergarten in the heart of a city, or a suburban 5th grade class, or a high school mechanics class — this has been the sharpening of my craft over the past year and a half — the daily problem solving in someone else's class, the entrusting of littlest div 1 children all the way to grown up div 4 students.

The biggest joy is the variety and the fun of getting to see so many schools, students, teachers, classrooms and administrators, and learning from each person and place.

The greatest challenge is that, in those minutes and hours, I must make them count. I must try to be competent at a subject that I find tough, try to be kind in the chaos of a junior high classroom, and try to not be awkward in the staff room at lunch.

— Kara Kuang

A preferred career option

I was a teacher for five years when my kids were younger. As they aged, they had some academic needs that benefitted



from me being at home and not prepping for school the next day. That's when I started substitute teaching. It has become my preferred career option so that I can travel back

and forth to my family in Saskatchewan and California without "missing" work.

I find the flexibility of subbing rewarding. I also love being able to say no to experiences that I did not enjoy the first time. This flexibility has given me better mental health, as I like to be available for my family when they have needs or want to travel together. I work for three rural school divisions around Calgary, and I love the diversity of students I get to be with.

The most challenging aspect of subbing is not having a connection with the students I teach like I would if I were in a classroom consistently. Classroom management is tricky when you do not know the kids' quirks or learning style needs. However, when you say yes to the same schools and teachers, you get to know their students more and more each time, and it makes for a more personal interaction.

— Karen Webb

SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS
continued on page 11



Want to Serve on a CTF/FCE Advisory Committee?

Each year, the Association is eligible to submit nominations for the CTF/FCE advisory committees. Committees seeking nominations for 2024/25 are the following:

Apply today!

Application deadline
April 10, 2024

- CTF/FCE Advisory Committee on French as a First Language
- CTF/FCE Advisory Committee on Diversity and Human Rights
- CTF/FCE Advisory Committee on Indigenous Education
- CTF/FCE Advisory Committee on the Status of Women
- CTF/FCE Advisory Committee on the Teaching Profession

All active and associate members of the Alberta Teachers' Association are eligible for the positions. Members must hold the highest level of membership available to them.

» All applicants are encouraged to reach out to their district representative(s) to better understand the work that Association committees undertake. If you have any questions, please contact Lindsay Yakimyshyn at lindsay.yakimyshyn@ata.ab.ca, 780-447-9425 or 1-800-232-7208.

Find more details and application information on the ATA website

COMM-182-11 2024 01

CALLING ALL MEMBERS

Apply to serve on an ATA committee!

The committees

To assist it in the business of the Association, Provincial Executive Council maintains committees that address topics of concern to teachers and carry out various aspects of the Association's affairs. Each year, a number of practising teachers are selected to serve on Association committees as well as to represent the Association on boards and committees of other organizations and provincial bodies.

The commitment

Committee members attend the committee's meetings, prepared to speak—from their perspective as a field member—to the forces affecting the respective committee's work.

The term for each of these positions begins July 1, 2024. Standing committee positions are generally three years in length. Travel and incidental costs, as well as release time, are covered to enable committee members to attend meetings.

Check out the list of opportunities and application information on the ATA website.

The deadline for applications is April 10.

The ATA embraces diversity and inclusion and is committed to representing members belonging to equity-seeking groups. Members belonging to equity-seeking groups are encouraged to apply.

» All applicants are encouraged to reach out to their district representative(s) to better understand the work that Association committees undertake.

If you have any questions, please contact Lindsay Yakimyshyn at lindsay.yakimyshyn@ata.ab.ca, 780-447-9425 or 1-800-232-7208.

COMM-209 2024 01

2024 gotcha! PHOTO CONTEST



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

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

GOTCHA! Contest rules

- 1 Photos taken by active and associate 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, 2023 and May 15, 2024, are eligible.
- 4 Please email photos to cory.hare@ata.ab.ca. Entries must be received by 5 p.m. on May 15, 2024.
- 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 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.
- 7 Each winner will also receive a certificate of merit, as will those receiving honourable mention.
- 8 Up to 20 additional entries may be selected for an award of honourable mention.
- 9 Each entrant may submit up to five photos but no entrant can win more than one top-three prize.
- 10 A panel of individuals with photography, publishing and teaching experience will judge the entries. The decision of the judges is final.
- 11 Winning photographs will be published in the ATA News.
- 12 Photos submitted for the contest may be published in the ATA News, the ATA Magazine or other Association publications.
- 13 Please read carefully. Failure to comply with any of these rules may result in disqualification.

Get snapping and good luck!

COMM-65-1 2024 02

POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

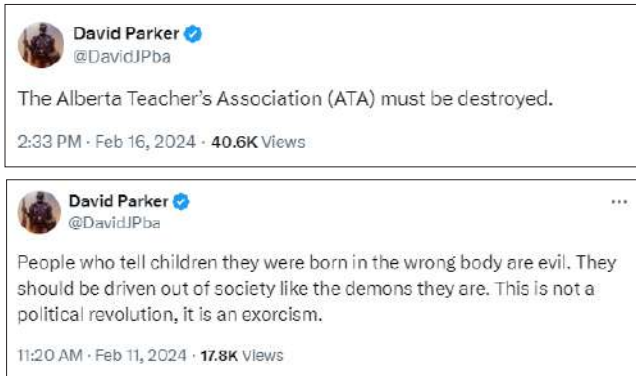
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review and potential challenges to party leadership. He also discussed broader political dynamics, including shifts within the NDP leadership race and emerging counter-movements within Alberta's political landscape.

Thomson stressed the importance of understanding these political dynamics for educators and stakeholders within the education system. He urged vigilance and engagement in the face of ongoing political changes, emphasizing the potential impact on education policy and outcomes in Alberta.

Thomson ended his presentation by playing an audio clip of Parker speaking about Smith's proposed gender identity policy and parental rights.

"I've not done as much as I could to show my gratitude to the premier for standing up against this insane woke ideology," Parker says. ■



Social media posts by David Parker of Take Back Alberta.

The ATA's annual Political Engagement Seminar provided a diverse array of presentations and discussions, including a panel of school board trustees, a presentation on the legislative process by Alberta legislature speaker Nathan Cooper and a keynote address on the importance of member engagement by Mike Lumb of Queen's University. More than 100 teachers attended this year's event.

SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS APPRECIATION WEEK

March 11-15
Check out this page for more information.

SUBSTITUTE TEACHING

continued from page 9

A necessity, not a choice



I am a substitute teacher not by my choice, but by necessity.

Teaching is my calling. I yearn to build relationships with students, colleagues, parents and the community. I dream of helping young people as they learn and grow. Substitute teaching feels like a combination of all the things that I struggle with, like

something Dr. Frankenstein cobbled together out of all my weaknesses. An unfortunate and undeniable stepping stone in my career, substitute teaching is a shadowy purgatory in which I trudge while hoping for a brighter future.

In my experience, substitute teachers are marginalized within school communities and the teaching profession. Despite holding the same qualifications as contracted teachers, substitute teachers experience

- a significant lack of respect,
- a lack of community and social supports in the workplace,
- a lack of feedback and support regarding their professional practice,
- a lack of access to applicable professional development, and
- a lack of steady, predictable income.

The precariousness of work and the economic

pressures experienced by substitute teachers are deeply entwined. There are substitute teachers in Alberta who live at or near the poverty line. This is unacceptable.

Substitute teaching in this province needs to be reformed. It should be deliberately and intentionally chosen, a sustainable career with a future and a pension.

Substitute teachers are professional teachers and deserve to be treated as such.

– Alec Wright

Tough gig requires a different skill set



I'm a career substitute teacher since 1984. I have loved the diversity of different classrooms. When I began teaching, we lived 65 miles from the closest school, and the school district I taught in paid mileage to subs. We have since moved, and my current school division has not paid mileage. My biggest complaint

in today's teaching climate is that subs are treated as sub-par teachers. We do not get the perks awarded to classroom teachers – no benefits, no pension, no wellness package, nothing besides our daily wage.

Many times I have to adjust or make completely new lesson plans on the fly. As a sub, I have had to have a completely different set of skills than the regular classroom teacher because I may not be back in that classroom the next day, but I may be back in the future.

Please respect substitute teachers. Without their support, our education program cannot run.

– April Brower ■

Winter issue of the ATA Magazine now available in schools.



IN THIS ISSUE:

Feature

Teaching in an unconventional setting can be a highly rewarding adventure

Unsung Hero

The band plays on for teacher Tom Spila

Wellness

Healthy school champions keep well-being front of mind

Technology

Tech tools help students who struggle with reading, typing and writing

Diversity

Teachers turn ideas into action in support of equity and human rights

In Profile

Career shakeup brings double success for Calgary teacher Leonard Cohen

Research Insights

Removing the stop signs at the intersection of gender and educational leadership

Most Memorable Lesson

When tradition takes a back seat to technology

Winter issue of the ATA Magazine is now available in schools. Digital version at teachers.ab.ca



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ATA members can receive exclusive savings on home and car insurance through our official insurance partner, [belairdirect](https://belairdirect.com).

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Designing Instruction in Inclusive Classrooms from K-12

A workshop with **Toby J. Karten**

April 12, 2023 | 9 am - 4:30 pm | Fantasyland Hotel, Edmonton | \$210

Join us for a workshop on inclusive education.

Using teaching methods that incorporate Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Toby Karten will highlight in this dynamic and interactive workshop how to create lessons with appropriate goals, methods, materials, classroom design and assessments for all students.



To learn more and to register, visit inclusionalberta.org

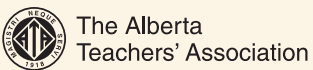
So what's new with you?

Did you know that the *ATA Magazine* has a section dedicated to sharing information about teachers' extracurricular endeavours and adventures?

Yes, it's true. It's called **Who's Out There?** and we're currently seeking submissions.

The section highlights new projects or accomplishments by Alberta teachers who are also

- authors
- musicians
- visual or performing artists
- podcasters
- athletes
- volunteers
- entrepreneurs



Teachers who wish to make a submission for *Who's Out There?* can email a short summary (75–100 words) to section editor Lindsay Yakimyshyn: lindsay.yakimyshyn@ata.ab.ca.

ATA Magazine

COMM-17-5-4-2021 10



2024 DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS CONFERENCE FOR LOCALS

Upholding Human Rights in Challenging Landscapes

THURSDAY, APRIL 18 (EVE) – FRIDAY, APRIL 19, 2024

Barnett House Auditorium
11010 142 Street, Edmonton



PD-80-18g 2024 03

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Did you know...

- We have meeting and banquet space available at Barnett House for corporate and private functions?
- We host business events, seminars, conventions, training sessions, AGM's, weddings, celebrations of life, Christmas parties and other private functions?
- We provide in-house catering to all types of events?

Please email meetingrooms@ata.ab.ca for more information or to book your event or special occasion.

ATRF's 2023 Annual Report is now available!

This year's report features the announcement of another contribution rate reduction, information about the plan's fully funded status (for the first time ever), member service highlights, and more!



For Full Report Visit ATRF.com/AR






The Alberta Teachers' Association

Healthy interactions WORKSHOP



Resolve conflict with confidence!

Join the Alberta Teachers' Association for a day-long conflict resolution workshop.

Teacher and school leader participants will learn to

- strengthen communication skills,
- recognize different types of conflict,
- navigate conflict, and
- move beyond the conflict.

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<https://surveys.teachers.ab.ca/s3/2023-24-Healthy-Interactions>

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The Alberta Teachers' Association

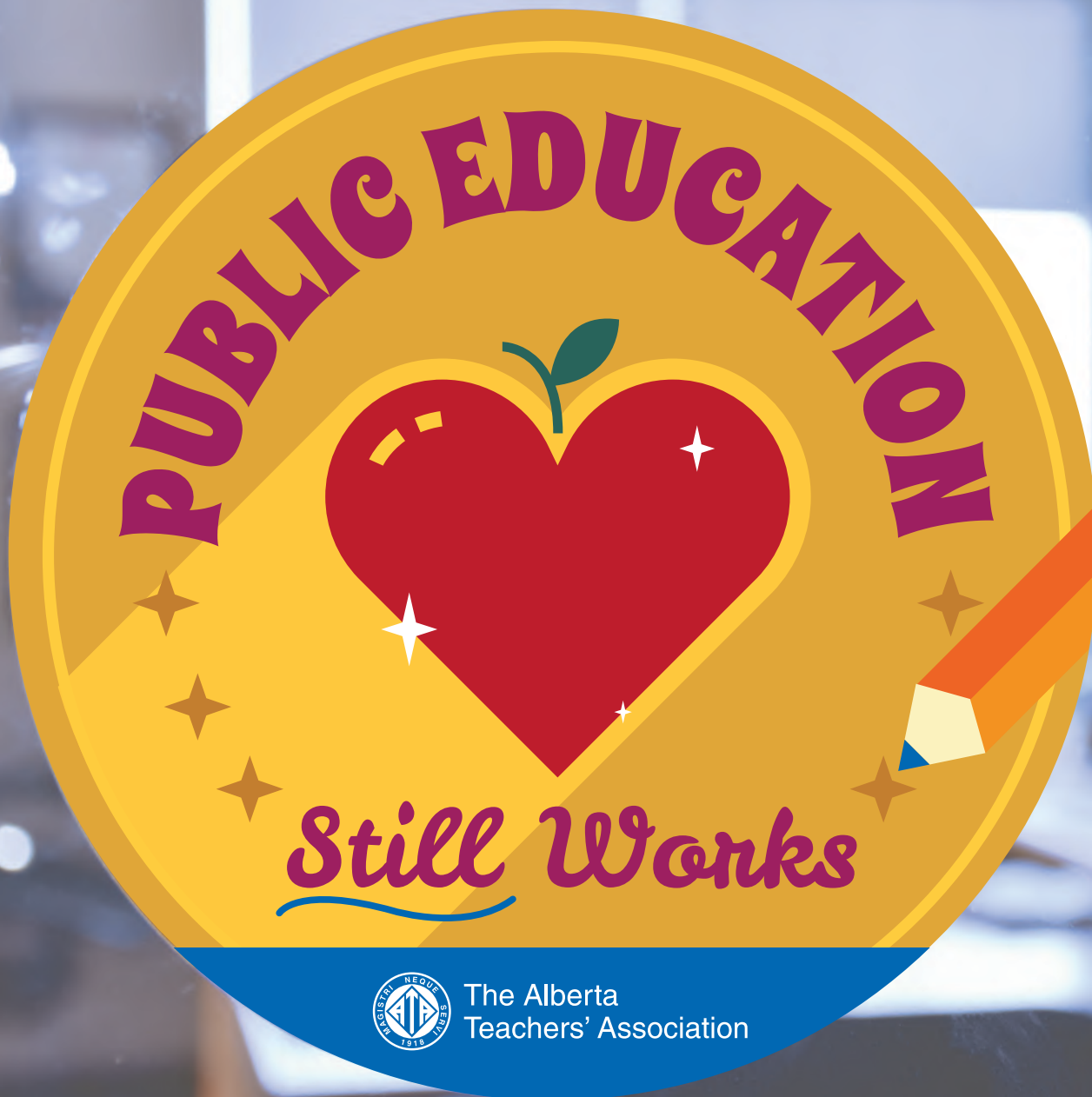


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TALEND

March 12, 2024 | Volume 58, Number 10

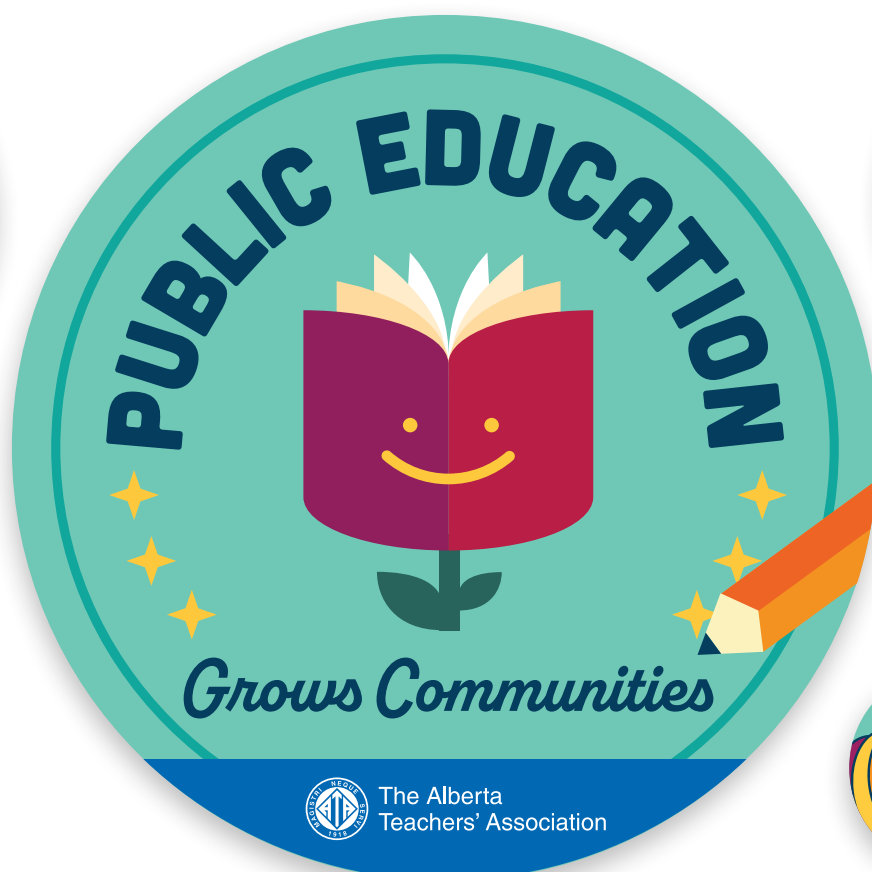
GET YOUR STICKERS HERE!



Public Education Still Works.

That slogan is anchoring a new set of stickers that are now available free to Alberta teachers. The stickers are a re-envisioned version of a campaign called Public Education Works, which launched in the 1990s in response to funding cuts by the Ralph Klein government. At that time, the government was taking steps to create and promote more private education options and were suggesting that the public education system was broken. The ATA's counter-campaign ended up being one of the most successful in the organization's history.

The new stickers are an initiative spearheaded by the ATA's Communication, Advocacy and Public Education Committee (CAPEC).



They are available in English and French.



Order yours free of charge by contacting communications@ata.ab.ca while supplies last!