

# SIGNS OF SPRING ATA NEWS

New season shows up in assorted ways.  
Page 16



2024 / 25

**ATA BUDGET**  
proposes modest  
fee increase.

*See pages 7 to 10.*

May 7, 2024 | Volume 58, Number 13

News Publication of The Alberta Teachers' Association



## NDP hopefuls denounce UCP

Candidates vying for the Alberta NDP leadership shared their thoughts on education during an ATA-hosted forum. See story on page 6.



### Party politics

Do we want school board elections to be partisan slugfests?

Read Jonathan Teghtmeyer's editorial on page 2.



### Diversity leaders gather

Annual DEHR conference provides hope during challenging times.

See page 11.



### Viewpoints

Saskatchewan teachers send their solidarity westward.

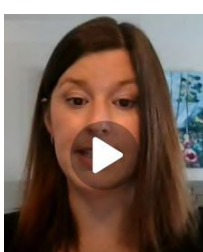
See page 3.



### Let's check our phones

Efforts underway to explore restrictions in Alberta schools.

See page 5.



### Send us your videos

New teacher testimonial campaign spotlights classroom challenges.

See page 6.

## Party politics don't belong in school boards



### EDITORIAL

Jonathan Teghtmeyer  
ATA News Editor-in-Chief

In the fall of 2009, Alberta's Culture Minister Lindsay Blackett introduced Bill 44, the *Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Amendment Act*. The bill aimed to enshrine sexual orientations as a protected ground in Alberta's human rights legislation.

Contained in the bill was a clause that would require schools to provide notification to parents any time topics related to sexuality, religion or sexual orientation was explicitly brought up in schools. Parents would have the right to opt children out of those discussions. Sound familiar?

It was widely known that the inclusion of that clause came as a result of a trade-off between social conservatives and progressive members within the Progressive Conservative (PC) caucus. A group of backbenchers, led by Airdrie-Chestermere MLA Rob Anderson, reportedly required the education provision in order to support the human rights changes. The resultant law could

have seen teachers brought up before a human rights tribunal if they discussed sexuality or sexual orientation without proper notification.

Blackett, Premier Ed Stelmach and Education Minister Dave Hancock became the face of attempts to sell the controversial bill to Albertans, even though it was well known that they didn't support the notification requirements.

Interestingly, in the years that followed, Anderson crossed the floor to join the Wild Rose party, led by Danielle Smith. Smith and Anderson would then cross the floor to join Jim Prentice's Progressive Conservatives in late 2014. Now, a decade later, Anderson serves as executive director for the office of Premier Smith.

I bring this story up now because the whole saga made me aware of a significant issue with how parties affect our political structures and democracy. At the time, Alberta was essentially a one-party state. The governing PCs had been in power for 37 years. The legislature was simply a formality in the law-making process. It didn't matter what arguments were made in the legislature — that was merely theatre. The real decisions had already been made, behind closed doors among the PC caucus members.

My ultimate conclusion, which has since been reinforced with examples from both sides of the aisle, was that the party system was a bug in our democracy. Unfortunately, at the provincial and federal levels, our parliamentary system has evolved in a way that now makes the party system a requirement.

But I can tell you one place where we definitely do not need parties and that is school boards.

Alas, the government has now introduced Bill 20, which proposes to bring parties into school board elections and operations.

Since 2009, it seems that politics has gotten increasingly divisive and often extremely heated. So much of the public discourse is now based on mythology and misinformation. We are definitely seeing this hit very close to home as many issues related to education have become highly politicized. The introduction of political parties will make it so much worse.

The *raison d'être* of a political party is to gain and hold onto power. The most effective way to do that is to diminish and ultimately attack your opposing parties. The focus of political debate is much more about scoring political points than it is about doing the right thing, or even the popular

thing. Bill 44 was prime example of this.

We don't need that in school board governance. We need thoughtful and passionate leaders. We need people who are in it for the right reasons — to bring good policy and good decision making into educational governance.

With parties in place, I anticipate that the elections will become partisan slugfests with more and more attention paid to divisive and controversial issues and less attention paid to addressing the real issues affecting schools. Party leaders will dictate the messages that best attract their target voters and backbench candidates will be largely silenced.

After the elections, we will see policy being advanced in order to trigger outrage or embarrass opponents as opposed to consensus building around the solutions that will most benefit students and improve public education.

School board trustees must be focused on looking after the best interests of students, not the best interests of their party. Contact your MLA and urge them to amend Bill 20 and to keep political parties out of school boards. ■

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

## The ATA's budget is in teachers' hands



### Q & A

Dennis Theobald  
ATA Executive Secretary

**Question:** I'm an ARA delegate and am being told of changes to the budget and some planned initiatives that are different from what I was given in February, after the local presidents' meeting. Why the changes and why so late?

**Answer:** Well, first of all, congratulations on being a local representative to the Association's Annual Representative Assembly (ARA)! I look forward to spending the May long weekend with you and about 450 of our closest friends.

You are quite right, the final draft budget that will be presented and debated at ARA will be different from what was distributed to delegates earlier this year. The final version, published as the *2024/25 Proposed Budget*, has been distributed in print to ARA delegates and is now posted on the ARA share site. This version differs in some respects from the first draft — while minor corrections have been made to various lines, the major

differences between the draft and the final version are highlighted in the companion documents *Pre-ARA Budget Update*, and *A New Day for Diversity*.

That these changes are being made and communicated in this time frame is both normal and healthy. The final version of the proposed budget almost always differs from the February draft because in the intervening months we come into possession of more information and new insights.

In some cases, changes in government policy or funding will affect Association programming plans and budget. An example is the indication that funding for teacher exchanges will be forthcoming from the provincial government, which allows us to remove from the final budget a proposal to fund a new teacher exchange program.

Similarly, additional information about membership count trends has allowed Provincial Executive Council to be more confident in increasing the anticipated revenue from dues. This has a direct impact on fees.

The responses we received from the budget survey submitted by locals also informed changes by providing an indication of which budget items were clearly supported, which were controversial and which simply lacked support. Comments in the budget survey also illustrated where efforts

to provide an explanation for certain budget items were inadequate or failed to accurately convey important information. For example, the original budget made provision for the hiring of an "event planner." Some members questioned the need for the position and its cost on the basis of their understanding of what an event planner did. In response to that initial communications failure, the position was renamed "event and conference facilitator" in the final budget proposal to better capture the nature of the work, which includes negotiating and managing increasingly complex booking processes for facilities and speakers at Association events and also for subgroups, particularly specialist councils. It was also communicated that there were substantial savings that might be realized by the person in this role that would offset the cost of the position.

Finally, some of the proposals that appeared in the February draft have been undergoing continuing development and were only finalized in recent weeks. For example, in anticipation of launching a diversity initiative, a proposal to create diversity and equity networks was built into the first draft of the budget.

As well, given the consistent increase in the demands placed on the

Professional Development program area over the course of many years, a proposal for an additional executive staff position was budgeted. However, in March, Council approved a series of diversity initiatives that expand on the already budgeted Diversity Equity Networks, making the need for the additional staff officer even more acute. This necessitated changes to the budget proposal that are highlighted in the additional material sent to delegates.

Developing the Association budget is a nine-month process that culminates on the Victoria Day weekend. The continuing evolution of the final budget proposal is a necessary and responsive part of that process. We try to facilitate the engagement of ARA delegates in the budget debate by providing as much information and context as we can.

At the end of the day (quite literally, in the case of ARA) it is the teacher representatives gathered in the assembly who will ultimately determine the program and budget of their Association for the year ahead. The decision is in your hands and those of your colleagues. ■

*Questions for consideration in this column are welcome. Please address them to Dennis Theobald at dennis.theobald@ata.ab.ca.*



# Your Saskatchewan colleagues support you



## VIEWPOINTS

**Samantha Becotte**  
President  
Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation

Teachers believe passionately in the value of high-quality public education. As president of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation (STF), I have the privilege of sharing that commitment to students and learning with more than 13,500 teachers across my province.

During the past 11 months, the contributions of Saskatchewan teachers have been challenged during collective bargaining with the provincial government. Despite this, members of our federation have demonstrated a high degree of solidarity and recognition that these negotiations will shape the future of our profession and the future of more than 200,000 students across the province.

This round of bargaining has been part of a multi-year process since members agreed to the last provincial contract in May 2020. Four years ago, teachers already had significant concerns about class complexity and working conditions, so it came as no surprise those were the top issues identified during member consultations ahead of the current negotiations.

*“In the same way that you have offered your solidarity, we will support your work to improve the teaching and learning conditions in Alberta schools.”*

When negotiations began in May 2023, the Teacher's Bargaining Committee understood it would be difficult. The TBC's proposals to address class size and complexity, compensation, classroom violence and other issues were presented in the spirit of initiating good-faith bargaining. What we learned is that the government had no interest in engaging in back-and-forth negotiations. Almost before our proposals were presented, billboards appeared with inaccurate salary information in an attempt to portray teachers as greedy. We soon discovered that the only word government negotiators knew was NO.

The intransigence demonstrated by the committee of government and school board negotiators has defined this round of collective bargaining, but it has also inspired an overwhelming degree of solidarity among our members because of our belief in open, transparent communication around negotiations.

During a long and difficult year, teachers have remained committed to our cause, and they have continued to show up for each other in ways we could hardly imagine. During public rallies, strike days, withdrawal of voluntary services and work-to-rule, STF members have acted collectively, decisively and

always with integrity. Our members have sacrificed much in their efforts to improve the quality of education and supports available to students, and despite setbacks, they have not wavered.

The commitment of STF members to improving learning and teaching conditions has resonated with the public, and the issues facing education are driving the conversation in our province. As a result of our advocacy, parents and caregivers now recognize how class size and complexity affect learning, and they are better informed about their child's experience. We have experienced vocal support for the work of teachers and the needs of education. Elected officials have received more than 400,000 emails and calls urging them to respond to the needs of students. Hundreds of people joined teachers during rallies and on the picket lines; contributions have come from labour groups, businesses and community organizations; and thousands of individuals have shared our message on social media — the people of Saskatchewan have demonstrated solidarity with our fight.

The tenor of collective bargaining has unfortunately done little to ease the concerns of teachers. The provincial government has demonstrated a lack of understanding of the importance of well-supported public education, and it lacks transparency when it comes to funding. The government has made multiple efforts to submarine the bargaining process, including an outside-the-contract agreement with the Saskatchewan School Boards Association, new pilot projects and the announcement of “record” education funding two weeks ahead of the provincial budget. We have remained firm despite this disrespect. The government's attempts to create a wedge between members and Federation leadership have failed. We are one and the same; we are all teachers, and our members remain united in the belief that students and teachers deserve better.

The Federation has been guided by our members throughout this process. Beginning with pre-bargaining consultation, we have listened to, communicated with, and worked to engage and inform members about every step. As I write this message, we are preparing to vote on what the government bargaining committee has termed its “final offer.” Whatever the result, we believe in the strength of our membership. Our commitment as a federation is to ensure members have the voice to determine their future.

As Alberta teachers look ahead to their own collective bargaining process, I offer you the support of your Saskatchewan colleagues and the lessons of our experience. In the same way that you have offered your solidarity, we will support your work to improve the teaching and learning conditions in Alberta schools and will join you in the ongoing effort to ensure high-quality public education for every student. ■



“Really all you need is a phone. Then you could buy all that stuff.”

## YOUR VIEWS

### On the government's announcement to pilot new social studies curriculum

**f Lynann Kroetsch**  
The UCP does everything with no consultation with people who actually know what they are talking about.

### On the ATA's Stop the Excuses campaign

**@ 780msj**  
Let's take this opportunity to remind those who hold the purse strings that students need QUALIFIED support staff, not warm bodies, sensory rooms (which provide a safe place for ANY child); teachers need their own professional development and administrative team involvement to support the diversity in the classroom and, as always, smaller class sizes so the needs of all learners can be addressed.

### On a presentation by ATA staff on artificial intelligence

**@ \_isert\_**  
Wow! I just attended an amazing talk on the role of Artificial Intelligence in education, presented by Dr. Phil McRae and Chris Gonsalvez. They

explained complex ideas in a clear, accessible way that blew my mind! Their insights were both practical and insightful, providing takeaways that can be used immediately. They also reminded us about believing in human potential and maintaining moral vigilance. I highly recommend attending their future sessions in your area! Trust me, you don't want to miss it!

### On the ATA encouraging members to join the NDP in order to vote in their leadership race

**f A Bee Lemon**  
Unions are political therefore the ATA should be political. It's a fact that the UCP is the party that has been cutting education funding in ways that the NDP didn't. The ATA should take sides on that.

• **Lee Bannister**  
Perhaps, but the current party is indicating that if you are not “drinking our Kool-Aid” then you are screwed and will not get any funding. So we would play the game and then, over some time, we would forget we were playing a game and start to think that is just the way it is.

## FOR THE RECORD

*“How can you claim that you're going to have time to do critical thinking and inquiry ... when I am, as a Grade 6 student, being trotted through 100 knowledge items on the history of democracy, going back to ancient Greece and Rome and the evolution of the Magna Carta?”*

– J-C Couture, University of Alberta adjunct faculty member and education instructor (and former ATA research co-ordinator) on the latest draft of the K-6 social studies curriculum.



ISTOCK

# ATA calls for delay to social studies curriculum rollout

Cory Hare  
ATA News Managing Editor

The Alberta Teachers' Association is calling on the government to pause piloting of the K-6 social studies curriculum in order to better integrate feedback from teachers.

Education Minister Demetrios Nicolaides announced April 26 that the new social studies curriculum will be piloted in the fall.

"I am incredibly proud of the work that's gone into developing this new K-6 social studies curriculum, and I am excited to see how it transfers into the classroom through piloting this fall," Nicolaides said.

"I look forward to further collaboration with school leaders and teachers as we continue our work to build a comprehensive curriculum that builds students' critical thinking, problem-solving and decision-making skills, and empowers them to be active citizens."

The latest draft of the social studies curriculum was released on March 14 following a series of consultation initiatives dating back to the fall. These included feedback-gathering sessions at teachers' conventions throughout the province, but ATA analysis has determined that the program of studies is still far from where the teaching profession would like it to be.

"We welcomed the opportunity to provide feedback ... unfortunately, teachers' recommendations are not reflected in this most recent draft," said ATA president Jason Schilling in a

news release. "Rather than proceeding to pilot a curriculum that we know is flawed, let's take the time needed to get it right and ready for the classroom."

Among teachers' concerns are the unrealistic number of concepts to be covered, some of which are developmentally inappropriate and conceptually inaccurate, as well as failing to engage higher order thinking skills, Schilling said.

A May 13 meeting of the Association's Curriculum Committee will gather insights from field members regarding further Association response to the newly released curriculum content, the piloting and implementation process, and future curriculum development work in other subject areas.

The Association will continue to advocate with ministry officials for the direct and substantive involvement of teachers in any future curriculum revision and development processes, Schilling said. In the meantime, he's urging the government to slow down, since schools are overcrowded and understaffed, and Alberta elementary schools have piloted and implemented new curriculum across four subject areas in seven grade levels over the past three years.

"What's the rush? The problems currently being faced by teachers having to implement a flawed math curriculum demonstrate the risk of proceeding prematurely to implement new curriculum content and design," Schilling said.

"Alberta students deserve the best, and so we must make the effort and take the time to get this right." ■

# Former ATA coordinator to receive the ATA's top honour

ATA News Staff

Calvin Fraser, former coordinator of the ATA's Member Services (MS), is being awarded honorary membership in recognition of his outstanding contributions to education and the teaching profession in Alberta.

Fraser will receive his honorary membership at this year's Annual Representative Assembly (ARA), which is scheduled to take place in Calgary over the May long weekend.

Fraser began his career in Saskatchewan in 1972, after earning a bachelor of education with a major in French. By 1980, he was in Alberta, teaching French and language arts at Jubilee Junior High School in Edmonton. He became the school's principal in 1987 and ultimately spent 18 years teaching in public schools. Reflecting his passion for life-long learning, Fraser also completed a master of education degree in education administration and a doctor of philosophy focused on public education.

During his teaching career, Fraser became engaged in the work of the ATA. He served on the local executive, professional development committees and the teachers' convention board before joining the ATA as a staff officer in 1990. By 1997, he was named coordinator of MS (now known as Teacher Employment Services [TES]). After working for the teachers of Alberta for 17 years, in 2007, Fraser was named secretary general of the Canadian Teachers' Federation. He served in that role for eight years before retiring.

Even in retirement, Fraser has remained committed to the teaching profession—both within Alberta and



Calvin Fraser, honorary membership recipient

beyond. He served as president of the Canadian Association for the Practical Study of Law in Education, and advanced public education through his work with superintendents and boards, governments, as well as other local, national and international organizations such as Education International, UNESCO, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Closer to home, Fraser has shared his expertise with the next generation of teachers by teaching education law and ethics courses at the University of Alberta, Campus Saint-Jean. Fraser can also be found back at the ATA on occasion, helping out the TES program area when needed.

The award of honorary membership — the ATA's top honour — is the culmination of Fraser's decades-long commitment to public education in this province. ■

# Indigenous leader to be granted ATA's Public Education Award

*Wanda First Rider recognized for dedication and inspiration*

Kim Clement  
ATA News Staff

A respected member of the Bloods from the Pukani Nation will be the recipient of the ATA's 2024 Public Education Award.

Wanda First Rider has dedicated herself to Indigenous education and cultural preservation for almost 40 years, working for the Calgary Roman Catholic Separate School Division in a non-certificated capacity. For the first part of her career, First Rider assisted Indigenous students in their traditional way of life and helped teachers understand Indigenous practices. In 2019, she was appointed as the school division's Elder, further solidifying her commitment to Indigenous education.

Throughout her career, First Rider has collaborated with various organizations, including the Friendship Centre and the Calgary Police Service. She currently works with the Stardale Women's

Group, which promotes reconciliation while empowering Indigenous girls and strengthening families.

First Rider's focus on literacy, numeracy and Indigenous languages helps bridge gaps for Indigenous students, ensuring their success and well-being. Her efforts to share diverse Indigenous knowledge promote understanding and respect for all Indigenous peoples of Canada.

In addition to her work in the classroom, First Rider serves as a guest speaker for Indigenous Studies courses in high schools and at Werklund School of Education at the University of Calgary. Her insights and experiences have inspired educators and contributed to a better understanding of Indigenous perspectives and issues.

The ATA's Public Education Award acknowledges individuals or organizations that have made exceptional contributions to public education. ■

# What should we do about cellphones in class?

## Efforts underway to explore restrictions in Alberta schools

Cory Hare  
ATA News Managing Editor

A global trend toward banning the use of cellphones in schools is gaining traction in Alberta, with the subject generating new processes and discussions within schools, school divisions, Alberta Education and the ATA.

Numerous jurisdictions around the world have imposed restrictions on the presence and use of cellphones within schools. This includes countries like Belgium, Spain and the United Kingdom; American states like Florida, Oklahoma and Vermont; and in Canada, the provinces of British Columbia, Quebec and Ontario.

In Alberta, the government recently implemented an online survey to gauge Albertans' views on the subject.

"While cellphones can be used to support learning, there are some risks that are of concern to the government," said Education Minister Demetrios Nicolaides in a statement provided to the *ATA News*.

Several studies suggest that smartphone and social media use can negatively impact mental health and affect adolescent self-view, Nicolaides said.

"It is imperative that we take any and all measures possible to combat growing youth mental health concerns," he said. "Alberta's government will have more to say in the future after we have finished talking to parents, teachers and other partners."

### ATA action

The Alberta Teachers' Association has been researching the impact of technology use since 2012 through its participation in the Growing Up Digital Alberta project. Findings show that continuous connection via social media is associated with increased rates of anxiety, depression and lack of focus, said Phil McRae, the ATA's research co-ordinator.

"I think implementing some smartphone restrictions has the ability to change that trajectory to the better," McRae said.

The ATA's latest pulse survey of members found that 75 per cent of

Alberta teachers would like to see a smartphone-free classroom environment. A number of Alberta schools and school divisions have already imposed their own restrictions, McRae said.

In light of the research and the growing concern about the negative effects of device overuse, the ATA has drafted a policy resolution that will be up for debate at its upcoming Annual Representative Assembly. The proposed policy calls for smartphone use in class to be confined to instances when the teacher identifies a pedagogical purpose or student medical/special needs.

"Teachers are raising their voices on this issue and whatever provincial restrictions or policies come in place, we have to protect the judgment of teachers for pedagogical use and for their students who have medical or special exceptionalities," McRae said.

The policy wording is intentional in specifying "smartphone" rather than cellphone because the main concern is continuous connectivity through social media apps, McRae said.

For ATA president Jason Schilling, a key element is preserving teacher autonomy to direct how electronic devices are used in their classrooms, and making sure teachers are able to express their opinions about the proposed resolution.

"We want teachers to weigh in on this issue," Schilling said. "That's why we have a resolution and a debate on the issue." ■

### FACTS

- One in four countries has banned smartphones in schools, through either law or guidance

Source: UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report, 2023

- 30 per cent of students around the world are distracted by digital devices

Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Report on 2022 Programme for International Student Assessment

### Example from Lethbridge

Last September, the leadership committee at Winston Churchill High School in Lethbridge, prompted by research and their own observations, identified cellphone overuse as an issue they needed to address. The committee began a series of consultation and education efforts involving teachers, parents and students that led to the creation of guidelines around the use of electronic devices during class time. The guidelines call for devices to be kept in students' bag, their locker or in a space provided by the teacher.

Creating the guidelines took four months and a lot of consultation and communication, said principal Tracy Wong. Much of the communication centred on explaining the why behind the initiative.

"We just want our kids to be their best selves, and we feel that

cellphones were getting in the way of that," Wong said.

It was important to school leaders that the initiative be framed as guidelines aimed at helping students address a problematic issue rather than a punitive policy, Wong said. If a student is struggling to follow the guidelines, the consequence is further education and support rather than punishment.

The guidelines have been in place since Feb. 1. At first, they were a significant adjustment for students and teachers, requiring regular reminders, but student resistance is gradually shifting to acceptance and appreciation.

"A couple students told me, 'I actually had a deep conversation with my friends during our spare,'" Wong said. "We've seen small improvements and we believe in it, so we're going to keep on this pathway."

### Proposed Association policy

The following resolution will be moved by Provincial Executive Council for debate at the Annual Representative Assembly in Calgary on May 18 to 20.

BE IT RESOLVED, that the use of smartphones by students in Alberta classrooms during instructional time is prohibited to promote a focused, engaging and safe learning environment, except where teacher professional judgment identifies a pedagogical purpose, including but not limited to enhancing digital literacy and engaging with the curriculum in interactive ways; in instances where digital wellness education is being explicitly taught or applied; and for accommodating properly documented student medical needs.



SUPPLIED

A cellphone sits idle in a bin at Winston Churchill High School, where new guidelines require students to sequester their devices during teacher instruction.



SUPPLIED

A hanging organizer is one way that cellphones are kept out of students' hands during instruction time at Winston Churchill High School in Lethbridge.

# NDP leadership hopefuls take aim at UCP

Cory Hare  
ATA News Managing Editor

Funding and curriculum were among the hot topics discussed during a forum of NDP leadership hopefuls held at Barnett House on May 3.

All five of the candidates vying to succeed Rachel Notley as leader of the Alberta NDP participated in the event that took place before 120 attendees of a meeting of local political engagement and communications officers.

During discussions that were largely collegial, the candidates agreed that public education in Alberta is woefully underfunded, and all pledged to correct this if they become NDP leader, then premier.

Jodi Calahoo Stonehouse, MLA for Edmonton-Rutherford, stressed the importance of taking a holistic, societal approach in order to provide all the supports that children need, such as proper nutrition, counsellors and occupational therapists.

"When we think about educating our children, it's just not your job, it's all of our jobs, so our investment in children has to be broader and it has to be by us as your leaders," she said.

Kathleen Ganley, MLA for Calgary-Mountain View, stressed that increasing funding would be just the beginning of what's needed.

"It starts with funding, but it also requires that we measure what class sizes are and that we measure complexity, Ganley said. "Complexity is something that we have to fund for."

Gil McGowan, president of the Alberta Federation of Labour, said candidates and others need to stop being squeamish and admit out loud that the UCP is playing by the same conservative playbook that has played out in Texas and Florida.

"They actually see public education as the cornerstone of a progressive society, and they're right, but they don't want a progressive society," he said.

"We will never get proper funding for public education out of this government because they simply don't believe [in] it. Not only do they not believe in public education, they actively want to destroy it."

If elected, McGowan said he "would launch a full-throated campaign in support of public education."

Sarah Hoffman, MLA for Edmonton-Glenora, said that, if elected, she would restore PUF funding and improve it, stop providing public funds to private schools, and negotiate with teachers to put class size limits in collective agreements.

"I am very keen to negotiate class size caps. That's something I would like to work on with you," she said. "I will sit down at the table and we will work on how we can land on reasonable class sizes together."

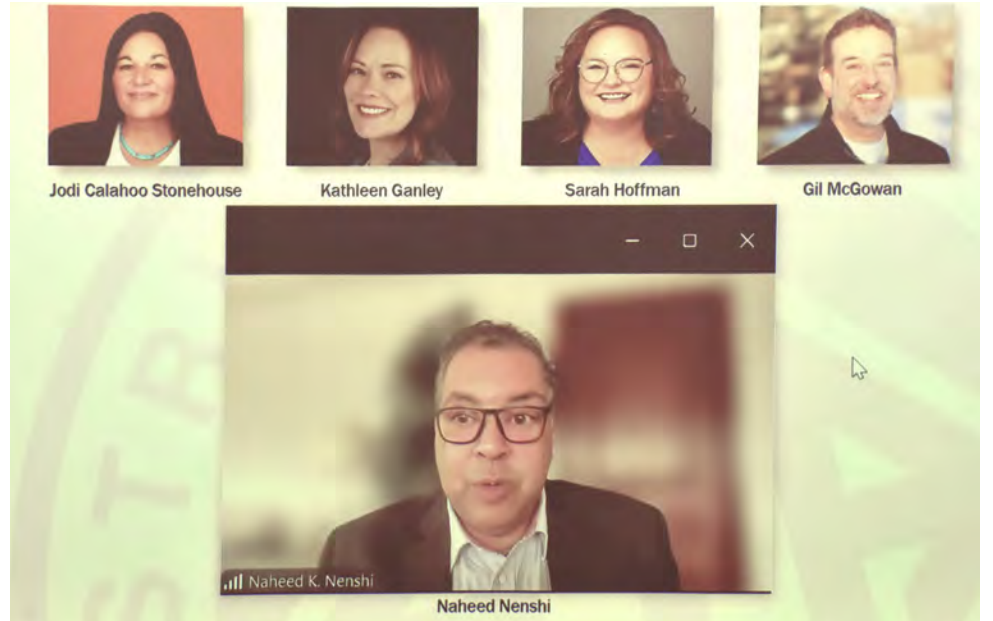
Speaking remotely from New York, former Calgary mayor Naheed Nenshi said education is such a large budget item that governments often think they can trim it a bit and still be fine, but the funding situation in Alberta is beyond that.

"It won't be fine anymore," Nenshi said. "The good news is, when you're mayor, you don't have any money. You've got to go find money — that really is your job, and I'm pretty good at it."

Nenshi responded to Hoffman's promise to negotiate class size limits by promising to make class size limits a matter of policy, so that classroom conditions wouldn't have to be negotiated.

"It will be something that will be embedded in the policy of how we run the provincial government," he said.

Hoffman later responded that classroom conditions need to be addressed in



CORY HARE

NDP leadership candidate Naheed Nenshi speaks over Teams during a forum hosted by the Alberta Teachers' Association.

collective agreements rather than policy so they can't be rolled back.

"We need to make sure that it's actually a legal, binding agreement," she said.

## Curriculum in the crosshairs

On curriculum, all five candidates accused the UCP government of politicizing development and content. All five pledged to start over if they become premier.

"We gotta ditch this curriculum. It's time for us to have a curriculum that matches our aspirations to have the best public system in the world."

— Naheed Nenshi

"We take the politics out, we ensure that experts develop the curriculum, we ensure that they're doing it on adequate timeframes and we ensure that there is proper implementation."

— Kathleen Ganley

"We have to co-design the curriculum. We have to invest, not only in ourselves, but in the experts and then we build it ... Our curriculum has to reflect who we are. It is going to take all of us to rebuild it ... but it's possible."

— Jodi Calahoo Stonehouse

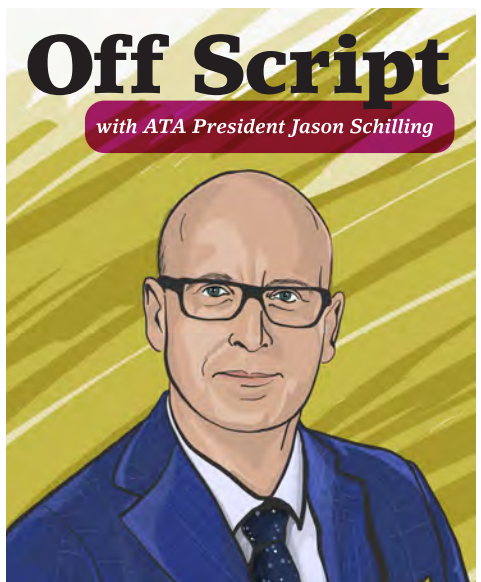
"Do you remember when other jurisdictions used our curriculum because it was the best in the country? That's where we have to get back to. The way we do that is by handing it over to professionals, including teachers, doing it on a regular cycle instead of all at once, providing a proper amount time for piloting and development."

— Gil McGowan

"You have my pledge that I will put experts back at the front of that process, including teachers who are active in their classrooms."

— Sarah Hoffman

## Teachers have something to say about phones in class



When I was kid, I used to love creating and sending notes to my friends in school. I am quite sure I spent more time creating the classic "Do you want to go to the dance with me? Circle your choice." notes than I did on my math homework. Flash forward several years to when I started my first teaching position and witnessed my junior high students doing the exact same thing — spending a little too much time on drafting a note instead of their language arts homework. Flash forward a few more years and there would be times I would lose track of how many times a day I asked my students to put their cellphones away. I guess some things never truly change, they just morph into something new.

Recently the Ontario government announced new rules on cellphone use in schools. The Alberta government also released a survey seeking public feedback on the use of cellphones in the classroom. In our latest pulse survey, the ATA asked the question about the use of cellphones, and 75 per cent of respondents said they thought smart phones should be turned off during classroom lessons, while 66 per cent of respondents felt that students were prioritizing their cellphones over interacting with other students.

At our last meeting, Provincial Executive Council passed a recommendation for a resolution for consideration at this year's Annual Representative Assembly whereby

smartphones would be prohibited during instructional time except where the teacher's professional judgment identifies a pedagogical purpose or a medical need. By having policy in place on this topic, it better frames our advocacy.

Regardless of how the cellphone debate works out and what policy is put in place, it will be ineffective unless there is support for it from all education partners. This will quickly become yet another Band-Aid approach to an issue that needs a much more fulsome approach. In the meantime, regardless of the means, kids are still going to find the most awkward way to ask someone to the dance. That will never change. ■

## New teacher testimonial campaign spotlights classroom challenges

ATA News Staff

The Alberta Teachers' Association is inviting teachers to shine a spotlight on the realities of class size and complexity through a short video testimonial.

The campaign provides a digital platform for teachers to share their perspectives directly with the public. By collecting and sharing these testimonials, the Association hopes to raise awareness about the critical issues impacting classroom environments

and advocate for much-needed reform.

The video testimonial initiative is part of the ATA's latest public relations campaign, Stop the Excuses, which seeks to highlight the challenges that educators and their students face as class size and composition remains key issues for education in the province.

Teachers continue to report increasing class sizes despite limited government data on classroom conditions, as the province stopped tracking class sizes in 2019. With Alberta ranking lowest in per-student public education spending across Canada, concerns about

overcrowded classrooms and dwindling resources have become increasingly prevalent, said ATA president Jason Schilling.

"We believe that by amplifying the voices of Alberta teachers, we can bring attention to the urgent need for improved classroom conditions," Schilling said. "This campaign is about fostering transparency and ensuring that the public understands the challenges our teachers and students face."

Teachers can participate by recording and submitting their video testimonials using the following QR code. ■





## The Alberta Teachers' Association

# 2024-25

# PROPOSED BUDGET

The 2024-25 budget developed by Provincial Executive Council (PEC) is continuing to move forward, with the final step being presentation to the 107th Annual Representative Assembly (ARA) for debate and approval by the teacher delegates gathered in Edmonton on the Victoria Day long weekend (May 18-20).

The budget of the Alberta Teachers' Association is a reflection of the Association's values, priorities, programs and activities for the upcoming year. Throughout the budget's development, PEC considered options, deliberated, and made critical choices, balancing financial considerations and member feedback before arriving at the proposed budget to be presented at ARA to delegates. At ARA, the work of delegates will be not only to consider the broad financial implications of the proposal, but also to examine the merit of the proposed programs and consider their value to members, to education and to the Association. We expect delegates will have thoughtful questions to ask, and your elected representatives and staff are ready to answer them.

First, on the staffing side, two new executive staff officer FTEs are included within the proposed budget, with an additional executive staff officer for each of Professional Development and Teacher Employment Services. It is anticipated that the additional staff in Professional Development would be particularly focused on making progress on several initiatives related to the Association's diversity programming. Further, to assist the work of Regulatory and Membership Support, a professional staff position is budgeted. Next, within Operations, the Association seeks to hire an event and conference facilitator to not only support the event related work of Specialist Councils, but also to promote available rental spaces at Barnett House. As envisioned, this role would assist individual Association subgroups (especially specialist councils) staff in negotiating venue and presenter contracts, leveraging the Association's purchasing power.

Aligned to the Association's ongoing commitment to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action, included in the current budget draft are proposals to hold an Indigenous symposium and to pilot an Indigenous education initiatives grant. Next, seeking to expand the support provided specifically to teachers in their early years of service, resources are allocated to establish a Beginning Teachers' Network. In addition, a new program, focusing on mentorship for school leaders is also planned.

Finally, to support expressions of member diversity, PEC is proposing several initiatives including the creation of new



ISTOCK

teacher-defined and -driven Diversity and Equity Networks (DENs) and the expansion of the Diversity, Equity and Human Rights (DEHR) committee. Further modifications to existing program design are being made that can be initiated within the existing budget. It is anticipated that additional initiatives related to diversity, and in response to recommendations of the Status of Racialized Teachers subcommittee established at ARA direction in 2021, will be developed and brought to ARA for approval and funding in future years.

Based on feedback from locals, a number of adjustments were made to the budget draft and these have been incorporated into the proposal to be discussed over the May long weekend. Balancing across a number of factors, Council is recommending an annual fee of \$1,422 for the 2024-25 fiscal year, marking a \$75 increase over the current fee of \$1,347.

While examples of budgeted items were included above, the following pages provide additional highlights of new programs and completed or discontinued programs within the proposed 2024-25 budget.

# Sample of proposed 2024–25 new initiatives

**Indigenous symposium – Professional Development:**

The in-person event would bring together Elders, Knowledge Keepers, subgroup leaders, elected representatives, and staff to discuss experiences and review barriers, opportunities, processes and protocol related to having Elders and Knowledge Keepers involved in projects or events.

**Beginning teachers’ network – Professional Development:**

The intent is to create a mechanism of support that can be accessed directly by beginning teachers, no matter their place or access to mentorship programming.

**School leadership mentorship – Professional Development:**

The program would be set up parallel to the Teacher Mentorship program in that it would be in the form of a matching grant program with locals. Within this program, locals would have access to a matching grant of up to \$2,000 to approach divisions to supplement existing “division only” administrator mentorship programs.

**Diversity, equity and human rights meetings – Government:**

Focused on the training needs of DEHR chairs at the local level, these one-day training sessions would be offered twice a year and would focus on a variety of rotating topics to empower DEHR chairs to provide leadership in their locals.

**Diversity and equity networks – Professional Development:**

Envisioned to commence as a pilot, establishing two diversity networks at this time would provide opportunities for the current ATAGSA and Status of Racialized Teachers subgroups to develop a level of autonomy with respect to providing supports to their members.

**CTF Women’s Symposium – Government:**

The CTF/FCE Women’s Symposium brings together members, staff, and leaders from across the country to discuss relevant issues related to women’s empowerment and advancement. The 2025 conference will be held in Alberta and, as such, the Association will play a role in planning, supporting and hosting this national event. While most of the costs of the conference will be borne by the CTF/FCE, the Association is expected to organize social events to welcome delegates and support networking.

**Indigenous Education Initiatives Grant – non-departmental commitments:**

The grants will be awarded to initiatives that focus on various aspects of reconciliation, including but not limited to cultural preservation and revitalization; education and awareness; and reconciliation in action. Each eligible initiative would be provided with up to \$2,000 per grant awarded.

## Completed/discontinued initiatives

The following have been deleted and will no longer be budgeted:

- Nature of Learning – Professional Development (Publications)
- TQS/LQS Credentialing – Professional Development (Workshops)

## Proposed annual fee for 2024–25

Provincial Executive Council is proposing an increase of \$75 to the Association member fee, taking the full-time annual fee to \$1,422.

	2023–24 approved fee	2024–25 proposed fee
<b>Total Fee</b>	<b>\$1,347.00</b>	<b>\$1,422.00</b>
<b>Funding for programs for which the local rebate does not apply</b>	\$153.00	\$204.00
<b>Net fee to distribute</b>	\$1,194.00	\$1,218.00
<b>Local rebate at 20 per cent</b>	\$238.80	\$243.60
<b>Balance of net fee (80 per cent)</b>	\$955.20	\$974.40





## Budget by program area

There are two parts to the Association's budget. The first part includes programs funded by the portion of the fee that is subject to a local rebate. In other words, for each dollar of the membership fee that is applied to this part of the budget, 20 per cent is rebated to local associations to fund their operations. Generally, this is referred to as the rebatable section of the budget. The remaining portion of the fee is used to help fund activities and/or programs not subject to the local rebate. This section is often referred to as the non-rebatable section of the budget.

### Part 1: Budget subject to local rebate

The table below compares program area expenditures for the 2023/24 approved budget and the 2024/25 proposed budget. It also provides a general description of the mandate of each program area.

Program area	Mandate	2023-24 approved budget	2024-25 proposed budget
<b>Teacher Employment Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To improve the economic well-being of teachers through work in collective bargaining, pension and insurance</li> <li>To effect increases in the funding for education</li> <li>To provide services to individual members on matters requiring discipline, legal assistance and professional relations</li> <li>To provide general service to and consultation with locals, sublocals and staff as requested</li> <li>To enhance awareness of the Association's services</li> </ul>	\$8,698,600	\$9,284,200
<b>Professional Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide for the improvement of teaching practice through specialist councils, conventions, curriculum work, current issues, local leadership development, assistance to local PD committees, field service and representation to other subgroups</li> <li>To prepare a corps of instructors and facilitators</li> <li>To improve the preservice education of teachers and liaise with other agencies in these fields and extended field experiences</li> </ul>	\$5,609,800	\$5,740,500
<b>Government</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To govern the Association and provide for its obligations beyond Alberta's borders</li> <li>To liaise with other organizations within Alberta</li> <li>To maintain communications internally with the membership and externally with the public directly and through media</li> <li>To improve conditions for education through the political involvement of members</li> <li>To support and represent teachers who are subject to the disciplinary proceedings and processes of the Alberta Teaching Profession Commissioner</li> </ul>	\$9,997,000	\$10,278,100
<b>Building</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide and maintain physical facilities for Association offices in Edmonton and Calgary</li> </ul>	\$3,306,000	\$3,351,700
<b>Operations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide for the financial and business operation of the Association, including business management, finance, general administration, human resources and document production</li> <li>To provide services to other program areas and subgroups</li> </ul>	\$5,785,000	\$6,100,500
<b>Nondepartmental commitments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide for items that are not directly a part of any other department and for items affecting all or most other departments, but which cannot be reasonably provided for within the department</li> </ul>	\$1,708,200	\$1,777,300
<b>Food Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide a catering service for participants at various meetings and other functions held at Barnett House</li> <li>To operate a cafeteria service for staff, tenants and the public</li> </ul>	\$822,100	\$824,400
<b>Information and Technology Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To maintain and safeguard the Association's information technology systems and equipment and to develop and maintain electronic capabilities and processes required by other program areas</li> </ul>	\$2,754,800	\$3,088,100

## Part 2: Budget not subject to local rebate

Member fees required to fund the second part of the budget are not subject to the local rebate, and 100 per cent of these fees are available to fund provincial Association programs. The table below compares expenditures and allocations for the 2023/24 approved budget and the 2024/25 proposed budget and provides a brief description of the nature of the expenditures.

<b>Expenditure and allocation</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>2023/24 approved budget</b>	<b>2024/25 proposed budget</b>
<b>Canadian Teachers' Federation</b>	Provides support for the Canadian Teachers' Federation based on a per capita fee	\$958,300	\$1,007,500
<b>Capital fund</b>	Provides an annual allocation to the fund, which is used to purchase any capital assets and to fund capital projects	\$400,000	\$1,000,000
<b>Special emergency fund</b>	Provides an annual allocation to the fund, which is used to fund emergent actions as approved by Provincial Executive Council	\$0	\$500,000
<b>Technology services project development</b>	Provides annual funding for projects related to membership application services; online services; unified communications; strategic technology management; and reporting, workflow and form services	\$800,000	\$1,365,500
<b>Specialist council membership grants</b>	Provides the annual operating grants to the Association's 21 specialist councils	\$870,000	\$870,000
<b>Accountability Action Plan</b>	Provides funding to support international partnerships focused on advancing system reform, as well as collaboration with subgroups and like-minded teachers' organizations that advance the profession's views	\$105,000	\$105,000
<b>Mortgage</b>	Provides for principal and interest payments on the mortgages in place for construction and renovations that were completed	\$2,323,000	\$2,500,000
<b>Public relations campaign</b>	Provides funding for a multidimensional public relations campaign to highlight the work of the Association and teachers to increase public awareness about the importance of public education and the need for appropriate funding for education	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000



# Diversity leaders reflect on history and hope

Lindsay Yakimyshyn

ATA News Staff

Take intentional steps to move toward hope, equity and inclusion in these challenging times. That was a key takeaway from the 11th annual Diversity, Equity and Human Rights (DEHR) Conference for Locals, held April 18 to 19 in Edmonton.

More than 100 members from across the province gathered for the conference, which is held each year to support local DEHR committees and their teacher-volunteers in their efforts to strengthen equity and inclusion. This year's theme of "Upholding Human Rights in Challenging Landscapes" offered delegates the opportunity to reflect on how they can spark and sustain change in a context marked by divisiveness.

Opening the conference, ATA president Jason Schilling emphasized the importance of the work that local DEHR committees are undertaking as he spoke about recent attacks on marginalized groups in the province.

"True diversity can only flourish when we actively work to break down barriers, confront inequities and challenge biases," Schilling said, "Not only our own biases but those of others as well."



ALEXA GUSE

A Habesha coffee ceremony provided attendees a taste of Ethiopian culture.

To support the ongoing efforts of DEHR leaders, staff from the John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights — co-sponsor for this year's conference — were on hand to share resources and learning tools on diversity, equity and inclusion.

The conference also offered breakout sessions on such topics as ableism, supporting Muslim colleagues and students, a traditional Habesha coffee ceremony, a panel session and networking opportunities to deepen knowledge and understanding of various dimensions of diversity.

Engaging in events like this and continuing to advocate for human rights builds hope, Schilling said.

"Hope comes to light when we work together toward something brighter and better, but it's not simply enough to hope for change, we actively have to work for that together."

## Black lives in Alberta

The conference included a film study introduced by former teacher Deborah Dobbins, who is now a cultural and special education consultant and the chief executive officer of the Shiloh Centre for Multicultural Roots.

The grassroots documentary, *Black Lives in Alberta: Over a Century of Racial Injustice Continues*, shares the story of five generations of Black Albertans and the discrimination they faced. The project holds special meaning for Dobbins, one of the film's directors and a third generation African American Albertan.

"Coming to the West meant freedom from the laws of segregation, but not from prejudice, discrimination and oppression," she shared.

Dobbins spoke of her own family's journey, from her grandparents' experiences as Black settlers in Alberta to the racial discrimination her mother and aunts experienced as Black



LINDSAY YAKIMYSHYN

Keynote speaker Deborah Dobbins introduces her grassroots documentary on the experiences of Black Albertans.



LINDSAY YAKIMYSHYN

Speaker Ntwali Kayijaho engages the group with his story before demonstrating his skills with spoken word poetry.

teachers in rural and urban schools in the province.

For Dobbins, these stories are important to share, as knowing our own past and our collective history can help us move toward fairness and, ultimately, hope.

"I just want to make sure that our young people know our roots — and also newcomers who come from the continent of Africa and Caribbean places — that they know that there were roots here in Alberta long before us."

## Rwandan-Canadian hip hop artist provides student perspective

Wrapping up the conference, Rwandan-Canadian hip hop artist and motivational speaker Ntwali Kayijaho shared his story growing up as a Black student in Canada.

Kayijaho recounted the different pressures and expectations he faced

— from parents, friends, teachers — and how his path to finishing school was not easy.

"Failure is the best tool," he told attendees, "Because it shows you what you need to improve on, but it also shows what kind of person you are. True failure is quitting, and I didn't quit. I didn't give up."

Kayijaho shared how his struggles as a student and young adult became opportunities to learn about himself, dig in and build resilience. He spoke on how he is now able to impact others through his socially conscious lyrics and performances as an emerging hip hop artist, his social activism and his motivational presentations to students.

Reflecting on his journey, Kayijaho shared a word of advice with the teachers in the room.

"Show those kids you are there for them," he said, "If a kid is lost or is failing, doesn't know what he's doing or if he needs help, give him a chance. You don't know who he'll become." ■

# DEHR committees discusses challenges and joys

Sandra Bit

ATA News Staff

Collaboration and connection, inclusion and empowerment — these were the overriding themes that emerged from a panel discussion with three DEHR committee members at the recent ATA DEHR conference on April 19.

Moderated by North West district representative Rhonda Kelly, the panel comprised teachers Stephanie MacPhail (Evergreen local no. 11), Keshini Senanayake (Calgary Public local no. 38), and Sarjenka Kuryliw (Greater St. Paul local no. 25).

Each answered five questions posed to them by Kelly that covered how they got involved with DEHR, what kinds of activities they organized, the ripple effect of DEHR work on their communities, the challenges they faced and what advice they could give others interested in this work.

All three teachers felt that their main motivations for forming or joining a DEHR committee were a commitment to social justice causes, a desire to help students and teachers in need, and wanting to connect with others who shared their values and passions. Each has served on a committee for several years, and all have developed many initiatives and projects to address

poverty, racism, and gender and sexual minority rights.

Senanayake summarized the work of DEHR committees across Alberta as attempting to address different forms of oppression systemically embedded in both the structures and policies of the education system.

"It will take a lifetime to address, disrupt and dismantle it, so anything we are doing, whether it's a social media blast, a book club or creating [support] groups ... is good work that helps to move us forward," she said.

She also reminded the audience of the benefits of sharing resources.

"There's power in this room ... we should connect together and amplify each other's work."

## Meeting local needs

When asked about the kinds of activities they had organized, each cited a variety of events and initiatives.

MacPhail's committee, based mostly in Edson and Hinton, established a DEHR week, delivered Pride flags to each school in the division and to central office, initiated winter clothing drives and created kids' birthday bags, which contain all the items needed to celebrate a child's birthday, including cake mix, icing, a cake pan, candles and decorations. These were delivered to families in need through local food banks. During DEHR week, they



LINDSAY YAKIMYSHYN

Local committee members share their insights and experiences during the 2024 DEHR Conference held at Barnett House on April 19.

promoted storybooks for younger children on the themes of anti-racism, Indigenous culture and LGBTQ+ rights, with accompanying lesson plans for teachers to use.

Kuryliw's committee surveyed Greater St. Paul members about their greatest needs, and based on the results, created a three-year, three-pronged action plan

to provide mental health, poverty, and FNMI and LGBTQ+ supports, each with its own budget and initiatives, such as workshops, food and clothing drives, and a book club to discuss *Braiding Sweetgrass*. The committee has also

**DEHR COMMITTEES**  
continued on page 13

# 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://StopTheExcuses.ca)



The Alberta  
Teachers' Association

## Making some changes?

If you're a vested member over 55 and planning to resign from your teaching contract at the end of the school year, you're eligible to start receiving your ATRF pension benefits. For a seamless application process, please apply online through *MyPension*, or complete and submit a Pension Application form directly to ATRF. Remember, planning ahead is key to ensuring timely access to your benefits.



ATRF.com



## Alberta Advisory Committee on Educational Studies

### APPLICATION FOR GRANTS Descriptive or Experimental Studies

The Alberta Advisory Committee for Educational Studies (AACES) invites applications for grants to support descriptive or experimental studies in education.

Grants in excess of \$6,000 are awarded only rarely because of limited available resources. Grants cannot be given for travel unrelated to the proposed research project.

Note: The application to the Ethics Review Committee must be initiated, and a copy of the submission to that committee must be included with the proposal.

Online applications and the guidelines for grant applications are available at Alberta Teachers' Association > Professional Development > Grants, awards and scholarships > Alberta Advisory Committee for Educational Studies Grant.

Applications are available online.

Questions regarding the application can be e-mailed to [Sudeep.Dua@ata.ab.ca](mailto:Sudeep.Dua@ata.ab.ca) OR submitted to

Administrator, Alberta Advisory Committee for Educational Studies  
c/o The Alberta Teachers' Association  
11010 142 Street NW  
Edmonton, AB T5N 2R1

780-447-9432 or 1-800-332-1280

Completed applications received by June 1, 2024, will be considered at the spring meeting of AACES.

Application  
Deadline:

**JUNE 1, 2024**  
**4:30 PM**

 The Alberta Teachers' Association



# DIGITAL NEWS

The ATA News is available online.

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

## DEHR COMMITTEES

continued from page 11

been present at the local St. Paul Pride event since its inception in 2019, promoting DEHR events and distributing swag.

Senanayake's Calgary DEHR committee divides its efforts into the themes of community, education and activism. They have established a teacher GSA, an antiracist teachers' network and plan to start an inclusion support network. They publish a monthly newsletter full of resources for teachers, offer a racialized teacher affinity space and have established a relationship with the Starlight family of the Tsuu Tina nation to provide day-long workshops on Indigenous arts and crafts, food, games and history. They have also focused on marginalized veterans with their Forgotten Voices of Remembrance Day project.

### Ripple effects

When asked about the ripple effect they thought their committees had had, Senanayake noted that when very hard stories surface about how racism and intolerance are directly impacting teachers' lives, "that's when you know your work has impact ... because you've built the trust for people to share and elevate those stories."

All three noted that more and more teachers are asking about and accessing DEHR resources and, as a result, have more confidence in tackling social justice issues in their classrooms.

"More people are being empowered to act, participate and lead in their schools," Kuryliw said.

All three panelists noted the growth of local Pride events. Kuryliw shared a story of two seniors at a Pride event telling her that they wished something like this had been possible at their school when they were young.

"It was such a nice moment ... that small interaction and appreciation we receive ... that's what makes it so important and impactful for me," Kuryliw said.

Despite challenges that include trying to run events across huge geographical areas, infiltration by hostile individuals, unsupportive superintendents, a drop off in participation after Covid and an often hostile political and social climate, all three panelists remain committed and optimistic in their advice.

Though feeling at times under attack and as if they are not doing enough, Kuryliw commented that students, colleagues and Albertans all need this work to be done and added her appreciation for DEHR members spearheading change.

MacPhail also reminded the audience, "Don't underestimate the snowball effect that a little thing can have, and don't be afraid to take that first step."

"Find and create community," Senanayake said in closing. "Start by finding your community and then create those communities for others." ■

## ATA names new SARO co-ordinator

Cory Hare  
ATA News Staff



Genevieve Blais, associate co-ordinator SARO

Staff officer Genevieve Blais is now heading up operations at the ATA's Calgary office, the Southern Alberta Regional Office (SARO).

Blais assumed the role of associate co-ordinator SARO on May 1. The role is responsible for the overall co-ordination of the southern office while also providing leadership and support to the Teacher Employment Services program area.

"I am eager to take on this role and I look forward to continuing to support the work of Teacher Employment Services and contributing further to the Alberta Teachers' Association in a leadership capacity," Blais said.

Blais became a staff officer in 2015, when she joined staff in the Teacher Welfare program area (now Teacher Employment Services). She has been based in SARO since 2018.

Blais began her career in 2006, teaching French immersion with the Calgary Catholic School District and eventually became an assistant principal. She began her involvement with the Association in her second year of teaching and over the years she served on various local and provincial committees. She has a masters of education (MEd) in educational leadership, earned at the University of Lethbridge. ■

# Look no further for exclusive group savings

As an ATA member, you can receive exclusive home and car insurance savings and enhanced coverages.



**belairdirect.**  
car and home insurance

Certain conditions, eligibility requirements, limitations and exclusions apply to all offers. Visit [belairdirect.com](https://belairdirect.com) for more details. Offers may change without notice. We offer car insurance and home insurance in Alberta, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador and Prince Edward Island and home insurance only in British Columbia. © 2023, Belair Insurance Company Inc. All rights reserved.

# 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](mailto:meetingrooms@ata.ab.ca) for more information or to book your event or special occasion.



The Alberta Teachers' Association



## Expanding Minds, Inspiring Hearts



- Biology
- Education
- English
- History
- General Studies
- Liberal Studies
- Open Studies
- Psychology
- Social Justice & Catholic Studies
- Entrepreneurship & Social Responsibility

Applications Still Open!  
[stmu.ca](http://stmu.ca)



**RUNNING  
WITH THE  
RANCHERS**

SINCE 1874

**Alberta Beef**

### CONNECT WITH YOUR LOCAL RANCHERS

Bring your students back to their roots by joining the Running with the Ranchers program with Alberta Beef Producers. Students in grades one to six follow along with the activities of an actual beef operation throughout the year and have one-on-one time with your local rancher.

Focus on developing critical, creative and geographical thinking while making connections to where your food comes from.

**For more information and to register your class contact us today:**

Tel: (403) 451-1172 Email: [taylorl@albertabeef.org](mailto:taylorl@albertabeef.org)

## ADVERTISING IN **ATANEWS**

**For advertising information,** contact Trevor Battyé at Trevor Battyé Advertising Sales 1-778-773-9397 [trevor@tbasales.ca](mailto:trevor@tbasales.ca)

**Next deadline** Thursday, May 16, 2024, 4 p.m. (Publication date May 28, 2024) Advertisers are encouraged to book early – space is limited.

**Circulation:** 38,000 We accept Visa, Mastercard, cash or cheque.

# TALENT

May 7, 2024 | Volume 58, Number 13

# SIGNS OF SPRING

How is spring showing up where you live?

- Responses gathered via social media.



Tomatoes and flowers.  
Lorelei Gertz-Cummins,  
Bonnyville Centralized High School



Visiting the local greenhouse with my granddaughter.  
Melanie Hunt-Girouard,  
École Montrose School, Grande Prairie



Teachers and admin support out for a Sunday afternoon hike in Fort Chipewyan.

Stephanie Mellross,  
Athabasca Delta Community School



Lambing season on the farm. This mama has no trouble raising triplets every year.

Karen Ellert Garber,  
Erle River High School,  
Milk River