

To publicize or to protect?

Yearbook photos of GSA members a complicated issue.

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on page 2.

Easy as π

See page 12

ATA NEWS

The Alberta Teachers' Association



Learn from the past.
Inspire the future.

March 27, 2018 | Volume 52, Number 14

News Publication of The Alberta Teachers' Association

No new money for class size

Budget funds enrolment growth but doesn't improve classroom conditions

It's time for a sales tax
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Nine points on private school funding.

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Feminism needs to move into workplaces, churches and council chambers, expert says.

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An obvious solution

Subsidies to private schools would better serve public system.

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Nine points on private school funding



EDITORIAL

Jonathan Teghtmeyer
ATA News Editor-in-Chief

Public school advocates are again calling on the government to reduce public funding of private schools. Meanwhile, United Conservative Party members will debate a policy in May calling for full and equal funding for private schools.

The Alberta Teachers' Association has long held that public funds for education should go towards public schools. Here are nine important points related to the public funding of private schools.

1. Public schools accept all students.

Public education (including public, separate and francophone school boards) accepts all resident students. Notwithstanding the constitutional mandates to serve minority, Catholic and francophone communities, public schools do not determine admission based on learning needs, academic ability or socio-economic status.

2. Alberta's public education system offers expansive programming options.

Sure, certain individual specialized public schools may have selection criteria, but these are for alternative programs within the public system: no student is left without a program to attend. These programs demonstrate

that the public system can provide programming alternatives.

3. Adequate special education must be accessible to all.

While some private schools will not accept students with special needs, others cater specifically to those students. I appreciate that many parents are finding success with these schools when public schools are unable to meet specific complex needs. But this is unacceptable. Tuition, travel or other barriers keep some parents from accessing a private education. As the Supreme Court said in *Moore v BC*, adequate special education is not a dispensable luxury. Public boards need to be better equipped to deal with those needs so that parents do not have to turn to the private system.

4. Alberta subsidizes private schools more than other provinces.

Alberta's private schools receive 70 per cent of per pupil operating grants provided to public school boards. That's up from 33 per cent in 1974 and 50 per cent in 1987. Quebec offers 60 per cent; B.C., Manitoba and Saskatchewan give half funding, while Ontario and the Maritimes offer no public support to private schools. Even if you support public funding for privates, 70 per cent is above the norm.

5. Private schools are funded six times more than what their parents contribute in taxes.

"But, private school parents pay taxes, and shouldn't their taxes go to their

kid's school!" This is a bit of a myth. Taxes pay to make an education system available to all children. You can opt out of using that system, but that shouldn't allow you to opt out of paying for it. Consider an average two-income, two-child family might pay about \$10,000 in provincial income tax and about \$1,000 in education property tax. If 15 per cent of that provincial tax revenue is used for education, then that family puts in about \$1,650 in taxes while the private school would get back \$9,350 for their two children.

6. Private schools do not save money.

Some say the reduced funding and lack of capital contributions amount to a savings for government. But it's only a savings if you assume that all private school students will switch to public schools if public funding ended. Even with no subsidy, Ontario has higher rates of enrolment in private schools. And a study done by the American pro-private organization *edchoice.org* found that rates of public funding had no significant impact on enrolment. Simply put, the decision to send students to private school is mostly made for reasons that are independent of funding levels.

7. Private schools create two-tiered education.

Some private schools receive public funding and still charge more than \$10,000 tuition. They often tout small class sizes as a recruitment tool. But why should only those who can afford

five-figure tuition get access to small class sizes? It is unjust to expect public school students to endure unreasonably large classes while public subsidies enable others to pay for higher tier service.

8. Public governance matters.

The Calgary Board of Education has an annual budget of more than \$1 billion. The spending of significant public funds should come with democratic oversight — that's why we have publicly elected boards of trustees in public education. Some private schools receive more than \$7 million per year in public funding without the same public governance.

9. It's about students, not teachers.

I am often asked why the Alberta Teachers' Association doesn't support teachers who work in private schools. Actually, we do. Private school teachers can purchase associate membership and receive a wide range of professional and even some representation services from the ATA. We also provide bargaining support for some groups who have organized under the Labour Relations Code. Furthermore, our aspirational policies support a unified profession that includes private school teachers. Our stance on funding models is about ensuring students have equitable access to high-quality education regardless of their circumstances, and that is why we prefer a well-funded, universally accessible public system. ■

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

Yearbook GSA disclosure a complicated issue



Q & A

Dennis Theobald
ATA Executive Secretary

Question: I'm serving as the teacher-advisor to our school's yearbook club and a question has come up: Can pictures or other references to student participation in gay-straight alliances (GSAs) be included in school yearbooks?

Answer: This is one of those questions that seems fairly simple on the surface but that raises larger issues about the obligations of schools and implications for school principals around disclosing membership in gay/queer straight alliances (GSA/QSA), particularly in light of recent amendments to the *School Act*.

While it would be a serious mistake to assume that a student's participation in a GSA/QSA allows any conclusion to be drawn about that student's sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, in some instances, participation in a GSA/QSA by itself can be contentious within families, the school and the community. For this reason,

special provisions have been introduced in legislation to limit disclosure of the identity of students participating in GSAs/QSAs.

In the last session of the legislature, section 16.1 of the *School Act* was amended to clarify that a principal is responsible for ensuring that a notification, if any, respecting a student organization or activity (including GSAs/QSAs), must be limited to the fact that the organization is being established or holding an activity. Furthermore, as of April 1, 2018, s. 45.1 of the *School Act* will require board policy regarding its s. 16.1 responsibilities to stipulate that the principal is responsible to ensure that notification, if any, respecting a student organization, must be limited to the fact that the organization is being established or holding an activity and "is otherwise consistent with the usual practices relating to notifications of other student organizations and activities."

From the perspective of teachers supervising the production of a school yearbook, this seems to set up a potential contradiction between the goal of protecting students' right not to be identified as participants in a GSA/QSA and the desire to treat these student organizations like any other school club or activity. The

legal picture is further complicated by provisions in the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIPP) Act* and associated regulations that permit disclosure of personal information with consent and, in certain circumstances, even without consent.

Therefore, we have the *School Act* provisions that appear to limit disclosure, but an ability to disclose under the FOIPP act or the school records regulation. On their face, these provisions are arguably inconsistent.

So from a practical perspective, what is a yearbook teacher-advisor or school principal to do?

Taken together, the *School Act* and the FOIPP act provisions do not prohibit disclosure of information about participation in a GSA/QSA as long as the student involved has consented to such disclosure. Most junior high or high school students will be sufficiently mature to determine whether or not they consent to their parent (or in the case of a yearbook feature, potentially the entire school and school community) being informed of their participation in a GSA/QSA. Furthermore, it is important that information about the existence and operation of a GSA/QSA not be suppressed — ideally, the

activities of the GSA/QSA should be celebrated in the same way as those of the chess club or the volleyball team.

At the same time, teachers and principals must prioritize the protection of students' personal information and actively involve and empower mature minor students in decisions that might result in their membership in a GSA/QSA being disclosed. This consideration supersedes all others, with the result that teachers and principals must also manage the practical risk that consent given by a student to disclose their participation in a GSA/QSA might be withdrawn by the student at a later date.

If principals and school boards determine that obtaining student consent is too onerous or potentially problematic, they can always choose to publish information about GSA/QSAs in yearbooks in ways that do not identify individual student participants, but that highlight the objectives of these groups, profile the activities they have undertaken, and celebrate their contribution to the life of the school. ■

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



The Alberta Teachers' Association

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Member of Canadian Educational Press Association
Association canadienne de la presse éducationnelle

Canadian Publication Mail Agreement No. 40065477 ISSN 0001-267X

Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to the following address:

Editorial Office, Barnett House, 11010 142 Street, Edmonton, Alberta T5N 2R1
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Download the app now by scanning the QR code or searching "Alberta teachers" in the App Store.

High stakes ... clear choices

The Alberta Alternative Budget proposes a 5% provincial sales tax, which would generate an additional \$5 billion per year in provincial revenue.



For more details on how the Alberta Alternative Budget would allocate this revenue, visit progressive-economics.ca.

Alberta needs a sales tax



VIEWPOINTS

Nick Falvo
Alberta Alternative Budget

Alberta is the only Canadian province without a sales tax. That needs to change.

With its own sales tax, Alberta could afford to make important new investments in social programs. For example, it could hire more teachers, improve staffing levels in long-term care facilities and build more affordable housing.

Without such a tax, Albertans must settle for mediocrity. We must watch as low-income households struggle to pay for prescription medication. We must watch student debt loads grow. And we must watch some social assistance recipients get by on a mere \$8,000 annually.

The province has seen several alarming trends in recent years. For example, our population is aging — in fact, the number of seniors in the province aged 85 and over has doubled since 1999. This trend will only increase.

Meanwhile, class sizes for young Albertans are growing. Just five of 61 school boards in this province meet the class size targets adopted by Alberta's provincial government in 2003. To bring class sizes up to the levels of a decade ago, Alberta would have to hire 3,000 additional teachers.

The value of monthly social assistance benefits received by single adults without dependents has actually decreased in recent years. Indeed, when accounting for inflation, recipients without dependents have seen their monthly benefits reduced by \$25 since 2012. Today, a single adult on income assistance in Alberta receives just \$627 per month to live on. This makes such a person highly vulnerable to homelessness.

Meanwhile, on reserves in Alberta, the child poverty rate is nearly 60 per cent.

Budgets are always about choices, and this principle has inspired alternative budgeting exercises across Canada for over two decades.

This year, an Alberta Alternative Budget was written in collaboration with individuals from the non-profit sector, the labour movement and advocacy sectors. It provides a costed-out plan of spending initiatives, along with a plan to finance them.

Our document provides an overview of the current public policy picture in the realms of health care, long-term care, K-12 education, post-secondary education, Indigenous peoples, child care, poverty, affordable housing and gender equality. We also discuss the province's current fiscal realities and provide an assessment of how Albertans can move toward increased economic diversification.

Access the alternative budget at www.progressive-economics.ca.

The Alberta economy experienced strong growth in 2017. But we still face an awkward reality: with the current price of oil, we don't generate revenue like we used to!

Our alternative budget gives the Notley government credit for increasing personal and corporate taxes, as well as increasing tobacco and fuel taxes. These measures allowed the province to avoid austerity budgets seen elsewhere, such as in Saskatchewan.

We also applaud the introduction of the Alberta Child Benefit, the move toward a \$15 minimum wage, the introduction of low-income transit passes, school lunch programs for elementary students and payday loan legislation.

Yet, going further, we propose that Alberta introduce a harmonized sales tax (HST). A five per cent provincial share added to the existing federal Goods and Services Tax (GST) would minimize compliance costs to business.

We would also introduce a rebate for low-income households, to offset any unfair impact the higher HST might have on them.

This provincial sales tax would generate \$5 billion in provincial revenue annually, while also keeping Alberta's overall tax burden the lowest of any province. Indeed, even with the five per cent provincial sales tax added to the current five per cent federal GST, Alberta would still have the lowest combined provincial and federal sales tax rate of all of the provinces.

Neighbouring British Columbia has a combined sales tax of 12 per cent, while Saskatchewan has a combined rate of 11 per cent and Ontario has a 13 per cent HST.

The Notley government says it has no intention of introducing a provincial sales tax. That may play well politically in the short term, but it makes for lousy public policy. ■

The editor of this year's Alberta Alternative Budget, Nick Falvo has a PhD in public policy and is Research Associate at the Carleton University Centre for Community Innovation. This column was originally published in the Edmonton Journal on March 20.

This opinion column represents the views of the writer and does not necessarily reflect the position of the Alberta Teachers' Association.

YOUR VIEWS

FACEBOOK FEEDBACK

On the ATA's call to scale back private school funding

Deb Rennie

It should easily be moved back to what it was for years under the Conservatives, before the last increase. That is a no-brainer.

Marco Pasin

I don't agree with this. As long as a private school has to teach the Alberta curriculum it should receive funding.

Karen Schweighardt

As an ATA member, I completely disagree. Not all private schools are elitist. Some fill a void that public education is missing. We tried public education for three years and it was not able to support the special needs of our child.

Breanne Connie

I think that's what is being addressed. If public schools were funded properly, children with special needs, and all children really, would be serviced properly and we wouldn't have to shell out tens of thousands to pay for education.

Chris Wudarck

Once again, the ATA is ignoring the interests of any teachers not teaching in full-time/part-time positions in schools. There are teachers who work at these schools! The thousands of unemployed or underemployed teachers and subs that need to work somewhere.

ON TWITTER

On the ATA's Political Engagement Seminar

Dr. Cristina Stasia @CristinaStasia

So looking forward to speaking at @albertateachers political engagement seminar tonight! Teachers are always one of my favourite audiences.

Karen Polard @kpolard

@albertateachers served up a great weekend with thoughtful speakers and interesting dialogue at our Political Engagement Seminar. Thank you for the opportunity, @ECTlocal54!

Shannon Dube @ShannonDube6

Listening to @JoelFrench from @PIAlberta speak about the Revenue Reno Campaign. Thank you to @albertateachers for bringing him in to speak to us.

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.



Project promotes cultural visibility at Sherwood Park school

SUCCESS STORIES

Caterina Rylance,
St. Theresa Middle School

Ciara Smith,
Elk Island Catholic Schools

In recent years Elk Island Catholic Schools' student population has seen a climb in diversity. As a result, the district identified an increasing need to improve cultural education to promote empathy and compassion for students who have recently immigrated to Canada. Many schools within the district established goals and an action plan to address these growing needs. One unique initiative that came from these action plans was at St. Theresa Catholic School in Sherwood Park.

At St. Theresa, the staff wholeheartedly embraced the idea of making all cultures visible by setting up a cultural centre and hosting a community support night. The school recognized that it can be really tough for students and their families to move to a new place. Many of these individuals are rapidly introduced to a new language, culture, community and environment. In previous years, the school has provided academic support for English Language Learners, but the staff felt that more could be done to support students and their families.

To get the initiative off the ground, the school applied for a grant from the Aspen Centre. Following receipt of the grant, ESL lead teacher Caterina Rylance used the funding to buy furniture, posters and resources that she used to transform an unused office into a welcoming place where students' cultures



Caterina Rylance (left) spearheaded the creation of a cultural community centre at Sherwood Park's St. Theresa Middle School along with support from school administration and central office staff, such as ESL consultant Ciara Smith (right).

would be celebrated, embraced and practiced. Rylance received support from teachers and administrators within the school as well as the central learning services branch of Elk Island Catholic Schools.

The new centre has multiple functions and provides ample opportunity for all students to engage in the space. During class time Rylance provides one-on-one support in language and curriculum to students who are new to the school and to Canada. At lunch hour the centre is open to all students to use its games and

resources. Also at lunch, the centre hosts a global café, in which all students are invited to share, speak other languages and learn from each other in an informal setting with café type beverages and conversation starters.

By displaying multilingual signage and flags from around the world, as well as having bilingual books and multicultural artifacts available, the cultural centre has become a space that many students see as a

SUCCESS STORIES continued on page 6

Teachers' pension plan the result of decades of struggle

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Maggie Shane
ATA Archivist

Leading up to its official 100th anniversary in June 2018, the Alberta Teachers' Association is celebrating its history through a number of initiatives, one of which is this column, entitled From the Archives. Curated by archivist Maggie Shane and appearing in each issue of the ATA News this year, this column will feature significant moments and individuals in the Association's history as well as interesting artifacts or documents from the Association's archives.

On April 1, 1930, Alberta joined jurisdictions all over the world in providing a pension plan for its teachers. It was the culmination of decades of work that predated the establishment of the Alberta Teachers' Alliance in 1918.

In 1915, Alberta Education had struck a committee to review pensions. It issued a report in 1917, and in 1918 Education Minister John Robert Boyle announced a policy in favour of a teachers' pension. Such a declaration was easily made; however, Boyle refused to support the prevailing pension structure advanced by the Alberta Education Association on the belief that it was a "combined insurance and annuity scheme."

The matter was referred to the newly formed Alberta Teachers' Alliance, which Boyle believed was better able to go about "collecting data and crystallizing the opinion of the whole provincial body of teachers." The Pension Committee of the ATA got to work and in 1919 proposed a straightforward pension plan to Boyle's successor, George Peter Smith, who was, reportedly, too preoccupied by the demands of his new position to give the matter serious attention.

The Alliance revived the matter in 1922 when the United Farmers of Alberta government put a civil service pension plan in place. Alliance general secretary-treasurer John Barnett and his colleagues proposed that teachers simply be included in the

civil service plan. This suggestion, unfortunately, languished on the vine. Three years later, the Pension Committee made another attempt and engaged Premier Herbert Greenfield's Cabinet Committee in work towards creating a plan without delay. This work also fell by the wayside over funding.

From 1925 to 1928 the Alliance conducted member surveys, conducted pension research, evaluated funding models and updated members at each annual general meeting (the precursor to the modern Annual Representative Assembly). Much pressure was brought to bear, with titanic struggles erupting between Barnett and Minister Perren Baker. School boards and teachers alike supported pensions for teachers and regularly dispatched lobbying delegations to the seat of government.

“It is difficult to lobby for a pension plan when the first priority is to get a job.”

— A Brief History of Teachers' Pension

In arguing for pensions, the ATA had relied upon interesting data drawn from the Department of Education's annual reports from 1917 to 1926. Teachers, they argued, were a transient work force, moving from town to town. In fact, many teachers moved through the profession on their way to other careers. A robust pension plan would stabilize the new profession and allow teachers to plan for the future. *The Alberta Teachers' Retirement Act* landed in the legislature in January 1928 and in many respects presaged the provisions of today's Alberta Teachers' Retirement Plan, including equal contributions by teachers and employing boards. Once again, however, the Alliance was disappointed and the bill of 1928 died on the order paper.

Nothing more on teachers' pensions appears in the legislative record between 1928 and 1939, through the

Great Depression. As stated in a 1980 internal ATA report entitled *A Brief History of Teachers' Pension*, "it is difficult to lobby for a pension plan when the first priority is to get a job."

The drive towards the ultimate goal of a teachers' pension plan was revived in 1935 when high school principal and radio evangelist William Aberhart took office as the province's first Social Credit premier. His efforts and those of the Alberta Teachers' Association (the Alliance having been renamed with the passing of the *Teaching Profession Act* in 1935), resulted in successful legislation coming into force on April 1, 1939.

For all the hard work and heavy lifting that had preceded the Teachers' Retirement Fund, there was almost as much to be done following this legislative success. Throughout the following months, the Association was a hive of activity related to the establishment of the fund, securing a \$5,000 loan from the provincial treasury, hiring a long-term staffer and operating out of the Association's offices on the third floor of the old Imperial Bank Building in Edmonton (at a rent of \$10 per month).

Contributions began as of Sept. 1, 1939. Refinements and updates to the plan continued well into 1944 (interprovincial transfers of pensions, provisions for married women returning to the profession) as the original legislation had been seen to be a temporary provision and a first step.

In June 1944, the government struck a committee to revisit the *Teachers Retirement Fund Act* of 1939, to which the ATA recommended securing the services of actuaries and financial professionals. However, between 1944 and 1946, the government's position went sideways as the cabinet once again considered civil servants' pensions and shelved improvements to the teachers' pension plan. Emergency annual general meetings ensued and a flurry of activity took place between 1946 and 1948. The Association's Pension Committee continued to press relentlessly for secure teachers' pensions and improvements to the plans well into 1955 and beyond.

In 1964, the Government of Canada enacted the Canada Pension Plan and the modern pension era began. Nevertheless, the plan continues to evolve to meet the needs of a longer lived, more diverse and active community of retirees. ■

Budget is 'good news for education,' minister



Education Minister David Eggen fields a question from a reporter following the release of the provincial budget on March 22 at the Alberta legislature.

Cory Hare
ATA News Managing Editor

Despite Alberta Teachers' Association concerns that it doesn't address class sizes or inclusion, the provincial government's 2018 education budget is a positive one, said Education Minister David Eggen.

"I'm not sure what budget the ATA is reading, but this is a good news budget for education," Eggen said. "We're talking about significant investment in enrolments, in capital, in all aspects of education, so really, they have to make sure they put things into perspective. We have delivered, during still difficult revenue times, a very, very strong K-12 education budget today."

The budget released on March 22 will see the government spend \$8.4 billion on education, up 1.7 per cent over last year's budget. Spending on basic instruction will increase by about 2.8 per cent, from \$6.04 billion to \$6.21 billion. The spending increase is intended to fund student enrolment growth, which is expected to be 15,000 students in the next year.

Eggen noted that he included in the budget a line for \$295 million in spending on the Class Size Initiative, and will heed the recommendations of a recent auditor general's report calling on greater oversight on how this money is spent.

"We will follow all of the recommendations of the auditor general in regards to the Class Size Initiative line," Eggen said. "What we will do is to ensure there is greater transparency and accountability around that."

The budget also increases spending on the government's school nutrition program from \$10 million to \$16 million, which will expand the program to 30,000 students.

The government's 2018 capital plan includes \$393 million for 20 new schools, some of which will primarily serve Indigenous students.

"This is a very proud continuation of the biggest school build in Alberta history," Eggen said.

Class sizes not addressed

The ATA reacted to the budget by issuing a news release noting that, despite its positive features, the budget does not do enough to address concerns about class size, undersupported special needs and growing costs.

"Albertans will appreciate the government's commitment to funding enrolment growth, building new schools and tackling student hunger. But this budget does not do enough to help teachers deal with large class sizes or support students with special learning needs," said ATA president Greg Jeffery. "Base grants

EDUCATION SPENDING

BUDGET 2017
\$8,216

MILLION

BUDGET 2018
\$8,356

MILLION

+1.7% CHANGE

have received only one small increase in seven years, and school boards are struggling to keep up with inflationary pressure."

Barbara Silva, of the parent group Support Our Students, said the budget contains little to celebrate. She called for a review of the province's education funding model.

"A budget should have a vision, and it shouldn't just be these Band-Aids. What is the long-term vision for how we're going to keep public education affordable and accessible?" she said.

"I think it's a very predictable budget for a government one year out from an election," Silva added. "It's not inspiring and it's not impressive; it's predictable."

Overall, the budget calls for spending of \$56.2 billion and a deficit of \$8.8 billion while including a plan to bring the budget into balance by 2023-24. The government's strategies for balancing the books include continuing an existing salary freeze on non-union public-sector employees and "reaching practical agreements with labour unions to control costs."

Opposition is opposed

Leaders of the opposition seized on the fact that the budget puts Alberta on track to be \$96 billion in debt by 2023, the year the government expects to balance the budget.

"If there was any indication the NDP was going to change its course and become fiscally responsible that was blown out in a spectacular way in today's NDP

budget," said United Conservative Party leader Jason Kenney.

"This is one part recklessness, one part completely unrealistic projections, higher taxes, massive increases in debt, all of which will burden future generations of Albertans."

Alberta Liberal Leader David Khan had a similar take.

"Instead of getting off the resource revenue roller coaster,

the NDP just bought a ticket for the front seat. Albertans are being asked to hold their breath and hang on for a wild ride," he said in a news release. "The NDP is spending without corresponding revenue and spending on the wrong things. The money isn't going to reduce class sizes. It's not going to support AISH recipients and vulnerable Albertans."

This...

from ATA President Greg Jeffery



Eight thoughts about the provincial budget



The provincial government released its budget last week, and here are some of my initial thoughts:

- The budget is generally good in that it funds enrolment growth, continues to build new schools and will expand the school lunch program to another 30,000 students.
- The budget scores a "needs improvement" because it does not do enough to reduce class sizes and enhance classroom supports for inclusion.
- More than 100,000 students have been added to the public education system since 2009, but teaching positions haven't kept up. In the fall, student population will grow by another 15,000 students.
- Funding enrolment growth ensures classroom conditions are maintained, but we need at least 2,000 additional teachers to get class sizes back to the accepted standards.
- Grant rates are not keeping up with inflation. Base grants have received only one small increase in seven years.
- Albertans also want enhanced funding to improve classroom conditions. Our polling shows
 - » 80 per cent of Albertans support added funding to reduce class sizes and
 - » 90 per cent agree funding should be increased to better support English language learners and other students with special needs.
- I understand that the government is in a tight financial situation, but that could be changed. If we adopted B.C.'s tax rates, we would have \$11.2 billion in additional revenue and still be tied for the lowest taxes in Canada.
- Adopting reasonable taxes would eliminate the deficit and bring in another \$2.4 billion to better support education and start to reduce the debt. ■

I welcome your comments —
contact me at greg.jeffery@ata.ab.ca.



United Conservative Party leader Jason Kenney shares his thoughts on the provincial budget.

SUCCESS STORIES

continued from page 4

safe haven where they can practice their own culture without pressures of assimilation. The whole school has become engaged in the space since its opening on Jan. 8, 2018.

In addition to supporting students, the school also identified a need to provide more support for families who have recently immigrated. A few weeks after it opened, the cultural centre expanded to provide resources and information about community supports that are available for newcomers. In order for this aspect to come to life, the school hosted a community support night on Jan. 29. Bringing together 10 community organizations that support newcomers to Canada, the event provided information about available supports to members of the Elk Island Catholic Schools community.

Due to its inclusive qualities, the cultural centre has provided a bridge between all students at St. Theresa. Students who are new to the school feel more at home when they are greeted in the space where their culture and language are represented and appreciated. The centre has also helped current students understand and embrace the newcomers because of their heightened appreciation and understanding for who the newcomers are and where they came from.

Although the initiative is in its infancy, it has already made all students more culturally aware and interested in learning more about other cultures. There is no doubt that, as the project continues to grow, the impact on students and their families within our community will be long lasting. ■

Caterina Rylance is an ESL lead teacher at St. Theresa Middle School. Ciara Smith is an ESL consultant with Elk Island Catholic Schools.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Success Stories is a new feature in the *ATA News* that enables teachers to share their successes with their colleagues. To submit an idea or an article about a new program or approach that you've instituted, please contact managing editor Cory Hare at cory.hare@ata.ab.ca.

Teachers make gains at local tables



EXECUTIVE REPORT

Sandra Johnston
ATA Teacher Welfare Co-ordinator

In this first round of local bargaining under the new two-tiered bargaining regime, local bargaining is proceeding slowly but with gains for teachers. The *Public Education Collective Bargaining Act* mandates that the parties for central table bargaining (the Alberta Teachers' Association and the Teachers' Employer Bargaining Association) negotiate a list of matters that can be negotiated locally between the individual school boards and the Association on behalf of teachers employed by that school board. Local bargainers are attempting to squeeze out the largest gains from that local list of matters.

With 36 memoranda of agreement having been achieved, the majority of gains have come in leaves of absence. Local bargaining cannot increase the number of days of personal leave because this is a central table matter, but other improvements can be bargained locally such as accumulation of the leave from year to year or the removal of restrictions.

While only a few bargaining units have achieved the removal of restrictions, several have gained the ability to accumulate personal leave days. Teachers have also seen gains in family medical and family needs leaves, like increased number of days and more flexibility in who the leave can be used for. At the beginning of this round, only one collective agreement included family needs leave (used to attend to both the medical and nonmedical needs of a family member, usually a spouse, child or parent), and now 14 agreements will include that provision.

Local bargaining for administrators is resulting in the achievement or expansion of lieu day entitlements. The legislated framework agreement of 2013 introduced these days for principals (two days, at the time) but they only applied while the legislation was in effect, ending Aug. 31, 2016.

With 36 memoranda of agreement having been achieved, the majority of gains have come in leaves of absence.

As well, local bargainers are finding some success in improving the structure of principal allowance formulas in order, for example, to increase allowances at small schools to deal with inequity between schools or to recognize increased responsibility in particular positions.

There has been some uptake on local professional development funds, with a few funds being increased and one existing fund being turned over to the local to control, rather than the board. Also, in PD, a couple of agreements have included guarantees of teacher-directed PD time during one or more of the designated "PD days." This will allow teachers dedicated time to pursue their individual teacher professional growth plans.

The vast majority of local agreements include improvements for substitute teachers, including notice of cancellation (or pay in lieu of notice), no supervision before the first class of an assignment, and paid time if the substitute is injured on the job. In one collec-

tive agreement, substitutes with enough service will be paid the daily substitute rate for the two days of teachers' convention beginning next year. In another agreement, substitute teachers will attend and be paid for one district PD day.

As usual, some bargaining units are having a more difficult time than others, and currently 25 bargaining units are still in negotiations. Of those, four have requested the assistance of a government-appointed mediator. In some of those bargaining units the employers are seeking significant concessions, and in two bargaining units the Association and the school boards have taken disputes to the Labour Relations Board. While we are expecting more settlements in these units, some teachers may be without an agreement into the fall. ■

For more information on local bargaining, please contact your bargaining unit's Teacher Welfare Committee (formerly Economic Policy Committee).

Feminism needs to move beyond Twitter, expert

Women's movement belongs in workplaces, churches and council chambers

Kim Dewar
ATA News Staff

How can men support women in becoming more politically engaged? They can start by doing the dishes.

Small daily actions are the key for creating large-scale social change, according to gender consultant Cristina Stasia.

"Even the smallest actions today can have a huge impact on the future," she said.

Fostering women's sustained political engagement was the topic of Stasia's keynote address at the annual Political Engagement Seminar hosted by the Alberta Teachers' Association in Edmonton on March 16 and 17.

There is a link between political involvement and housework, Stasia said. Before marriage, single childless women spend 10 hours per week on housework compared to eight hours for men. After marriage, childless women almost double their hours of housework while men do less.

"That means that men gain an extra couple of hours every week to attend the constituency association meeting, to review the new party policy — to network," Stasia said.

Time constraints are just one of the many reasons that Stasia cited for the low number of female political party candidates throughout elections in Canada. For example, Edmonton and Calgary combined have only five women serving on their city councils. Before Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced his first cabinet, Canada was ranked 20th among nations for gender parity in ministerial roles. Canada is now ranked fourth.



Gender consultant Cristina Stasia speaks at the ATA's Political Engagement Seminar in Edmonton on March 16.

Other factors that dissuade women from entering politics include workplace harassment, unequal pay and even assault, Stasia said.

Stasia pointed to the anti-sexual assault and women's empowerment movements #MeToo and Time's Up that have brought gender issues into the public conversation recently. She noted that although 4.8 million people marched around the globe to support gender equality after Donald Trump was elected in 2016, only one million marched in support of the #MeToo movement this year.

"Anger at the increasingly visible injustice against women should be sparking from one person to the next," she said.

"We need to take our activism off Twitter and move it into our workplaces, our homes, our communities, our churches and our council chambers."

Feminism is often said to occur in waves because of the movement's tendency to swell and then recede, but Stasia cautioned that "we cannot afford to let this wave recede."

"Feminism isn't a trend. It's consistent, daily hard work," she said. "Feminism is the zombie of political ideologies — you can try to kill it, but feminism is coming for you!" ■

Engaging weekend

The Political Engagement Seminar took place on the evening of Friday, March 16 and throughout the day on March 17.

The Friday portion featured a keynote address on women and politics. The Saturday agenda featured a panel of provincial government ministers that included David Eggen (education), Marlin Schmidt (advanced education) and Christina Gray (labour and democratic renewal).

Another Saturday panel reserved for opposition politicians was attended only by Stephen Mandel, the recently elected leader of the Alberta Party. (Alberta Liberal leader David Khan could not attend due to a late-developing illness, and the United Conservative Party didn't send a candidate because education critic Mark Smith had another engagement).

Rounding out the agenda were updates from Jonathan Teghtmeyer, associate co-ordinator of communications for the ATA, and Joel French, executive director of Public Interest Alberta.

An obvious solution

Subsidies to private schools would better serve public system

COMMENTARY

James Wilt, Progress Alberta
Special to the ATA News

Part of a Progress Alberta campaign calling on the government to defund elite private schools, this commentary is adapted from an article that appears on Progress Alberta's website at www.progressalberta.ca.

Six new schools, 116 new playgrounds or 290 new teachers.

That's what Alberta's public education system could be gaining every year if the province decided to stop providing subsidies totalling \$29.1 million a year to the 17 most elite private schools — each of which also charge more than \$10,000 in tuition per student.

"We're wasting money on subsidizing a private choice," said Joel French, executive director of Public Interest Alberta, in an interview with Progress Alberta. "We don't do that in other areas. If somebody doesn't want to use a public library, we don't write them a cheque from the government to go buy a book."

These highly exclusionary elite private schools are all located in or near Calgary, and include Strathcona-Tweedsmuir (tuition up to \$22,285/year), Webber Academy (\$18,800/year), Rundle College (up to \$17,625/year), the Edge School for Athletes (up to \$18,270/year) and West Island College (\$16,120/year).

And those annual tuition rates don't even include enrolment deposits, one-time payments required for acceptance at some schools, which range from \$6,000 at Webber Academy and \$7,000 at West Island College (made up of a \$3,500 "family membership" and \$3,500 "capital improvement fee") to a \$1,500 "family initiation fee" at Calgary Waldorf School.

These elite private schools are inaccessible to the vast majority of Alberta parents, yet the government continues to fund them at a per-student rate of 70 per cent compared to public, separate and francophone students — making it the most heavily subsidized private school system in the country.

"Part of the problem is that as the private school sector grows, then parents become even more unwilling to pay taxes because they say they're 'doing us a favour' and 'why don't we do them a favour and lower their taxes?'" said Trevor Harrison, professor of sociology at the University of Lethbridge in an interview with Progress Alberta.

These elite private schools are inaccessible to the vast majority of Alberta parents, yet the government continues to fund them at a per-student rate of 70 per cent compared to public, separate and francophone students — making it the most heavily subsidized private school system in the country.

"It's hard to know where the plateau level is, but at some point the balance of power shifts so much that suddenly the public system just doesn't have enough funding. That's the really dangerous point."

Class sizes in Alberta's public, separate and francophone schools continue to bulge well past recommended guidelines.

That is especially the case for kindergarten to Grade 3 classes. The 2003 report by Alberta's Commission on Learning that set the class size guidelines still used

today recommended, on average, 17 students in each K-3 class. Yet Calgary's Catholic school district has an average K-3 class size of 21.4 students, and Edmonton Public's is even worse: 22.2 students per class.

Higher grade levels often don't fare any better. Wetaskiwin Regional Division has an average of 25.4 students in Grade 4 to 6 classes — that number should be kept at or below 23, according to the guidelines. Calgary's public high schools have 29.1 students per class, well over the advised mark of 27.

The report by Alberta's Commission on Learning emphasized that the numbers were guidelines, not fixed metrics. But it also wrote that it "feels strongly that province-wide class size guidelines are critical for the early grades," noting that reducing class sizes for K-3 classrooms has discernible academic benefits, especially for poor and minority children. Furthermore, it reported that inadequate funding and class size were the two most serious concerns voiced by Albertans during the commission's consultations.

These are issues that have only been exacerbated in recent years, as inflation and population growth have eaten away at existing funding frameworks. Between 2009 and 2017, the population of students in Alberta increased by 16 per cent, but the number of teachers grew by only seven per cent. Recent investments by the Alberta government have helped—but more is needed.

There's one very obvious way to help fix this: redirect the \$27.4 million that is currently subsidizing elite private schools into the public system, which would help to fund new schools, teachers and classrooms for regular Alberta kids.

This would play a significant role in ensuring that children from all socio-economic backgrounds have the same opportunities to learn in classrooms with recommended sizes and opportunities to interact with teachers and support staff. ■

Anniversary of historic court ruling celebrated

Sandra Anderson
ATA News Staff

The 20th anniversary of the Vriend decision was celebrated at the University of Alberta on March 19. The historic Supreme Court of Canada ruling established LGBTQ2 rights in Alberta and throughout Canada.

"The Vriend decision was our Stonewall," said Kris Wells, an assistant professor and faculty director with the U of A's Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services, referring to the Stonewall riots that sparked the gay liberation movement in the U.S.



Kris Wells
ISMSS director

Wells was part of a panel of lawyers who worked on the case and LGBTQ2 community members who recalled the struggles of the case and its aftermath in Alberta. Hosted by Paula Simons of the *Edmonton Journal*, the panel also included University of Alberta chancellor Doug Stollery, Justice Sheila Greckol, Justice Julie Lloyd and U of A board chair Michael Phair.

Wells noted that the Alberta Teachers' Association showed great leadership following the 2008 Vriend decision, as it was the first organization to act on the ruling in Alberta. At the next Annual Representative Assembly, delegates voted overwhelmingly to add sexual orientation to teachers' Professional Code of Conduct. Wells added that the Association continues this important work today.

The panel noted that the struggle for equal human rights continues for the LGBTQ2 community as well as for other minorities in Canada. Lloyd, who represented the Canadian Bar Association as an intervener in the case, stated that "Vriend taught us that we have to be allies for each other."

The historic case focused on a young lab instructor, Delwin Vriend, who was fired from his position at King's College when an important college donor discovered he was gay. Vriend went to the Alberta

Twitter reaction

Janis Irwin @JanisIrwin

@KristopherWells notes that following the landmark Vriend decision, @albertateachers added sexual orientation to the code of conduct. Alberta teachers voted overwhelmingly in support. The early leadership by the ATA re: LGBTQ2 rights must not be forgotten.

Human Rights Commission to appeal his dismissal, but the commission turned him away because sexual orientation was not a protected ground.

Appealing the decision to the Court of Queen's Bench, Vriend initially won, but the Alberta government appealed the decision. Several of the panelists recalled how, while hearing the case for the Alberta Court of Appeal, Justice John McClung showed his bias by turning his back on Vriend's lawyers as they spoke. When speaking about the case, current dean of law Paul Paton stated that although McClung was a graduate of the school of law "we do not teach our students to turn their chairs around."

Vriend's legal team appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada and the court ruled in Vriend's favour. Noting that Section 15 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms says that all individuals are equal before the law, the Court found that protection from discrimination against sexual orientation should be read into that section.

It was a historic ruling, but the euphoria of the LGBTQ2 community was quickly quelled by an angry backlash that swelled in Alberta. Phair, who was a well-known gay Edmonton city councillor at that time, said he had so many death threats following the decision that extra staff were brought in to deal with all the phone calls. Eventually, the anger calmed down and the Alberta government accepted the ruling. ■

Education ministers declare support for copyright law

ATA News Staff

Provincial and territorial education ministers from across Canada have issued a policy statement in support of current copyright law, which they fear may be changed in a way that would negatively impact teachers and students.

The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) issued a statement saying that existing legislation "strikes a good balance between the needs of Canadian students and the publishing sector." The council comprises the education ministers of all provinces and territories except for Quebec.

The statement's release is in reaction to a mandated review of the *Copyright Act* by federal members of Parliament. It's expected that MPs will consider the application of "fair dealing" to classroom uses of copyright-protected materials.

Five years ago the federal government changed the act to include education as a stated purpose in the fair dealing provision of the act. Supported by a decision of the Supreme Court of Canada, the fair dealing guidelines allow teachers to communicate or make copies of short excerpts of copyright-protected work for students in their classes without having to purchase a copy of the entire work for each student in a class.

"We want to underscore for our federal counterparts that the guidelines respecting fair dealing used in K-12 classrooms are founded on the Supreme Court of Canada's interpretation of fair dealing and play an important role in education," said Zach Churchill, Nova Scotia's education minister and chair of the CMEC Copyright Consortium.

"It's important that copyright law balances the necessary protection of artists' and writers' works with the ability of teachers and students to use short excerpts from copyright-protected materials in their school work."

The review of the *Copyright Act* has begun and is expected to continue through 2018. ■

Principal fined for unprofessional conduct



PITFALLS AND PRECAUTIONS

Gaylene Schreiber
Secretary to ATA Professional Conduct Committee

Pitfalls and Precautions is a series that aims to educate teachers on professional conduct issues by highlighting situations addressed by the ATA Professional Conduct Committee. The purpose of the series is purely educational, so some non-essential information from the actual case may be omitted or changed.

A school principal pled guilty to four charges of unprofessional conduct and received fines totalling \$2,100 and four letters of severe reprimand to address wrongdoings under articles 13 and 17 of the Code of Professional Conduct, and section 23 of the *Teaching Profession Act*.

Over a period of several years, the school principal criticized the professional reputation of teachers to people who were not proper officials and without first informing the teachers. Her comments served to undermine the reputations of these teachers and caused other teachers to be wary of their associations with these teachers.

The principal also made statements that encouraged divisiveness between staff members and encouraged others to do the same. Through her actions, she fostered conflict, poor communication and mistrust between staff and administration, and incited confrontations between members of staff. The principal's actions undermined the collegiality so necessary for effective teaching practice and for a healthy professional environment characterized by a unified learning community. The profession expects that principals will serve as collegial role models for staff and set an example of professionalism.

This same principal took actions that failed to provide opportunities for staff members to express their opinions and bring forth suggestions regarding the administration of the school, contrary to article 17 of the Code of Professional Conduct. The principal used a variety of methods to intimidate teachers. Her manner of

receiving opinions and suggestions about the administration of the school served to belittle and demean those teachers, thus leading to a chilling effect on staff contributions. The profession expects teachers to be able to provide input and feel welcome to voice their suggestions and opinions.

Additionally, the principal sent inappropriate text messages to another teacher. These text messages were offensive, racially charged and profane. The principal also sent a text speculating about sexual advances between colleagues. The profession expects that principals will be appropriate in their use of communication with their colleagues, avoid profanity, racism and offensiveness, and refrain from communicating harmful speculation about other colleagues.

In its consideration on penalty for the four findings of guilt, the committee considered the breadth, extent and significant impact resulting from the principal's actions. The committee noted that the principal had held various leadership positions prior to serving as the school's principal and had been in the profession for more than 25 years. This gave her many opportunities to understand the culture and expectations of the profession. ■

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8:30am – 4:00pm
Open to public and school tours

8:30am
Official Launch on the Essential Skills Stage

8:30am – 4:00pm
Career Zone exhibitors and Try-A-Trade® and Technology activities

9:30am – 2:30pm
Essential Skills Stage interactive demonstrations

9:30am – 12:30pm
Essential Skills Forum

JUNE 5

8:00am – 4:00pm
Competition Day 2

8:30am – 4:00pm
Open to public and school tours

8:30am – 4:00pm
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9:30am – 2:30pm
Essential Skills Stage interactive demonstrations

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The Alberta Teachers' Association

RETIREMENT CONSULTANTS NEEDED

The Alberta Teachers' Association Retirement Consultant (RC) Corps exists to provide retirement and pension information to members and assist members in preparing for retirement. RCs are active teachers who provide this volunteer service to members in their geographic area as required. No specific pension background or knowledge is required.

Applicants to the provincial RC corps should have

- a valid Alberta teaching certificate (or equivalent),
- five years' teaching experience,
- strong communication skills and
- relevant skills and capacity to travel and work evenings and weekends.

Demonstrated commitment to the Association (or another teachers' organization) is considered an asset.

Selected applicants will

- serve an initial three-year term to a maximum of three consecutive terms (up to 9 years);
- receive training via seminars at the Association Summer Conference (in August) during the first three years of the appointment; and
- attend two Saturday training sessions during the school year (one in the fall and one in the spring).

TO APPLY

Teachers interested in applying should submit a letter of application to Chris M Gibbon, Executive Staff Officer, Teacher Welfare via email tw@ata.ab.ca, or mail to 11010 142 Street NW, Edmonton, AB T5N 2R1. Letters should highlight reasons for applying and any relevant skills.

Deadline for application is **April 6, 2018**.

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- Local Presidents' Seminar
- Local Program Course
- Professional Development Course
- Teacher Welfare Course

Contact your local for eligibility requirements.

Association Corps Programs (by invitation)

- Economic Consultants' Seminar
- Retirement Consultants' Seminar
- Professional Development Facilitators' Seminar

External Groups Programs (by invitation)

- Education Decision Makers' Seminar
- Strategic Leadership Seminar

Specialist Council and Convention Association Programs

- Specialist Council Presidents'/Conference Directors' Seminar
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Contact your specialist council/convention association for eligibility requirements.

For details and course descriptions, visit the Association's website, www.teachers.ab.ca.



The Alberta Teachers' Association

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New Canadians in the Classroom: Resources for Teachers

This new 2Learn.ca Special Edition has a collection of resources for Alberta teachers who have refugee and immigrant students in their classrooms. The collection provides background information about refugees and immigrants, research about culturally diverse classrooms as well as

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New Canadians in the Classroom: Resources for Teachers can be found at www.2learn.ca/specialedition/NewCanadians.

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The Alberta Teachers' Association



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TALENT

March 27, 2018 | Volume 52, Number 14



Mmm... π !

3.14159265358

Math-related witticisms and creative pastries ruled the day on March 14 as teachers and students celebrated Pi (or Pie) Day. The annual event takes place on the 14th day of the third month in honour of the first three digits of pi (3.14).



3.141592653



KATRINA LASZUK

Grade 3 pupil Saul Castro-Gonzales enjoys a treat at St. Patrick's Community School in Red Deer.



JESSICA DUBRULE

Teacher Jessica Dubrulle of Peace River's Glenmary School celebrates with her special pi T-shirt.



MIKE MECHANUCK

Students at Beaverlodge Elementary School brought in 18 pies to share with classmates and staff.



SUPPLIED

Staff at Westpark Middle School in Red Deer attempt to recover after enduring many pies in the face.



SUPPLIED

Grade 8 and 9 classes celebrate Pi Day by having a slice of pie with their teachers at St. Marguerite Bourgeoys Catholic School in Innisfail.

3.1415