

ATA NEWS

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News Publication of The Alberta Teachers' Association

Reflections on ARA

Read This ... by ATA president Greg Jeffery.
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CORY HARE

A contractor works to complete a walkway and landscaping around a new statue that was installed at Barnett House last fall. Entitled *On Her Shoulders*, the four-metre tall bronze statue commemorates the ATA's 100th anniversary.

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Rural schools desperately need more support

Complexity rather than size a growing problem in rural classrooms.

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New critic

NDP opposition names Sarah Hoffman education critic.

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Rural schools desperately need more support



EDITORIAL

Jonathan Teghtmeyer
ATA News Editor-in-Chief

Beside my desk, on the ledge in front of my office window, sits a relatively small, unassuming brass hand bell. It is one of the items in my office that brings me the most pride.

I received it at the end of my first year of teaching, when my school division nominated me for the Edwin Parr Award for outstanding first-year teacher.

The trustees committee overseeing the award were impressed by the list of courses that I taught that school year: Pure Math 10, 20 and 30; Math 31; Math 33; Physics 20; and Phys Ed 10. I also served as students' union staff advisor and senior boys' basketball coach.

As a beginning teacher, I knew this was demanding, but it did not look much different from what my colleagues were doing.

The Grades 7 – 12 school I taught in for eight years, Breton High, had about 200 students (although fewer now) but still offered the full set of core courses (including Math 31 and all three sciences) and had well-equipped

computer, cosmetology, food studies, construction and mechanics programs. As much as possible, although not every year, the school would also offer art, drama and other options.

However, like every other school in the province, we were funded primarily through per-pupil funding from the province. This current funding model is not working for schools of 2,000 students, let alone those of 200 students.

That is why, over the past few years, I have heard regularly from teachers in rural areas who say that they have been less able to identify with Association messaging on class size – their problems are more about class complexity.

I was blessed in my first year to have very few combined courses. But, over time and despite my protestations, these increased.

In a neighbouring school, a colleague taught all of the junior high students in one classroom at the same time. He had to prepare for more than 20 programs of study each year.

A delegate at this year's Annual Representative Assembly talked about having combined courses in each of her assigned classes last year, including one class with students learning four different courses, and another that had three courses, two students with severe special needs and no EA support.

"Funding for students is based on the

The only reason rural schools are viable right now is that they are being propped up on the overworked backs of teachers and other staff.

number of students, not the programs," said the teacher, noting that her tiny K–12 school of 86 students lacked resources and the teachers lacked prep time.

"I'm exhausted, I'm burnt out and I have [the] expectations of my Bio 30 kids, who are going to be writing the diploma exam, when they have had nine minutes of teaching time per hour because I have four other courses to teach at the same time," she said.

"It's almost like third-world education," she added. "And if you don't believe me, I would love you to come out and do my job for the day, because I just want a prep period that week."

ARA delegates heard a number of stories about the struggles faced by rural schools in the debate over a resolution calling for the development of a new rural education strategy.

The truth is, the only reason rural schools are viable right now is that they are being propped up on the overworked backs of teachers and other staff.

Rural and urban schools both face

funding challenges, and the common way to deal with them is to add more students to existing classes. Fortunately for rural schools, the classes are starting out small. Unfortunately, when students are added, they too often come with a different course assignment.

This is another policy piece where the Association has agreement with the new United Conservative Party government. The UCP platform promises a review of the funding formula to "ensure that rural schools have adequate resources to deliver programs in an equitable way."

Given the base of support for the UCP in rural areas, this should be a very positive, overdue move. However, in an environment of cost containment, I am leery about how these improvements will be achieved without additional investments.

Rural schools need a new strategy and a renewed funding formula. We can't do more with less. ■

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

Policing the profession is our responsibility



Q & A

Dennis Theobald
ATA Executive Secretary

Question: Why is the Association hiring yet another Member Services staff officer?

Answer: The budget passed by delegates of the 2019 Annual Representative Assembly includes funding to hire an additional executive staff officer as well as an additional professional staff officer in the Member Services program area. The request for these new positions was driven by substantially increased demand for Member Services support generally and, in particular, a significant increase in the number and complexity of discipline cases.

This increase in demand is not a temporary spike. The number of calls to Member Services for assistance has consistently grown by 10 per cent, year over year, for at least the last three years. In the last school year alone, the number of investigations ordered in response to complaints has more than doubled, and the number of ongoing investigations has increased five-fold, an

indication of their increased complexity.

In accordance with the *Teaching Profession Act*, every misconduct complaint must be investigated, and hearings, when ordered, as well as appeals must take place within strict timelines. So there is little flexibility around managing case loads.

Furthermore, the policing of teacher professional conduct is a legislated responsibility of the Association that cannot be put aside because it is inconvenient or expensive, or because we do not have sufficient staff resources in place. While the Association's professional conduct processes are intended primarily to protect the public interest, the ability to complete an investigation and undertake, if necessary, a hearing or an invitation in a timely manner is also a service to teachers. Being the subject of a complaint is highly stressful and the best the Association can do for members who find themselves in this position is to bring the process to a conclusion as swiftly and fairly as possible.

There seem to be a number of factors that are driving growth in demand, including

- threats to teachers' employment status and declining classroom conditions relating to financial pressures facing school boards;

- increases in the size of the student and teacher populations, resulting in more complaints in total;
- tensions arising out of the inclusion of students with special learning and behavioural needs in the classroom;
- growing public awareness of the Association's professional conduct processes;
- escalating parental demands together with diminished deference to teachers' professional judgment;
- a growing tendency for complainants to name multiple teachers in the same or related complaints; and
- the use of professional discipline processes by employers to augment employment-related sanctions.

Delegates at the 2019 ARA appreciated this emerging reality and provided the Association with the resources we need to respond. ■

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

FOR THE RECORD



My government will further improve Alberta's education system by presenting the *Choice in Education Act*. It will renew the Alberta advantage in education by restoring and expanding the choices available to parents and children.



— Throne speech delivered May 22 by Lt.-Gov. Lois Mitchell on behalf of the UCP government



YOUR VIEWS

ON TWITTER

Support Our Students @SOSAlberta

From today's throne speech: "In the fall the government will introduce the Choice in Education Act. It will restore and expand choice for students and parents." Choice is a euphemism for segregation.

On Premier Jason Kenney's use of the term "special interest group" in reference to the ATA

Lisa Hauk-Meeker @lhaukmee

The AUDACITY of @jkenney calling TEACHERS a "special interest group" in EDUCATION #shame #resist.

Timothy Huyer @tim4hire

The term "special interest group" is pejorative and is only used by politicians to denigrate the group advocating that interest. "Stakeholder" is the term that shows respect for the group. Mr. Kenney's use of language is no accident.

Chris LaBossiere @ChrisLaBossiere

This is why I know I can't be a partisan Conservative anymore. Teachers are a special interest group in education like doctors are a special interest group in medicine.

From ARA 2019 (#ARA2019)

Adriana LaGrange @AdrianaLaGrange

This morning I addressed the 102nd Annual Representative Assembly opening session of @albertateachers, attended by more than 400 teachers from across Alberta. I look forward to working with them to continue delivering quality education to Alberta's students. #ableg #abed

Michelle Gagne @mgagne134

Starting ARA a little emotional. The list of teachers that have passed away in 2018, that's my grandma. Proud to be a teacher like she was.

Shannon Dube @ShannonDube6

The @albertateachers finally got a Status of Women's Committee! Success to support the 74% of people in our profession who are women.

Jen Halfyard @JenAnne11

Just heart-crushing stories about life as a northern and rural teacher. Funding model must change.

FACEBOOK FEEDBACK

Kelsey Ferguson

I am extremely appreciative to all of the educators who are spending their May long weekend working tirelessly and passionately for all Alberta teachers. They have my utmost respect.



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.

'I look forward to working with you'



VIEWPOINTS

Adriana LaGrange
Alberta Education Minister

Note: The following text is an abbreviated version of the speech delivered by Education Minister Adriana LaGrange to the ATA's Annual Representative Assembly on May 18, 2019.

I am deeply honoured and humbled to stand before you as the newly minted minister of education. I'm especially proud to be only the second ever female minister of education since 1905.

First, I would like to acknowledge the important work your association does in holding a high standard for teachers. I would also like to recognize the valuable work of you, the teachers who are committed to living up to those high standards.

As a former school trustee, mother and grandparent, I have seen first-hand your dedication to students. I know your commitment goes beyond the classroom as many students bring the complexities of their realities to school with them. A huge thank you for all that you do — recognizing that sometimes you, as the teacher, are the only stable, trusted person in that child's life!

As a representative of this ARA assembly, you are clearly dedicated to improving your profession, as evidenced by your giving up a long weekend to do it! So thank you very much!

I am still just weeks into my new role as minister of education. To say it has been a whirlwind would be a huge understatement. I have made it a top priority to get out and meet with as many stakeholders and educational organizations as soon as possible. It's very important to me that I get to know you, the people on

the front lines.

I am no stranger to education and would consider myself a lifelong learner. By profession, I am trained as a rehabilitative practitioner working with the mentally and physically challenged. My interest grew from growing up with my younger brother, who was born with Down Syndrome. While raising my seven children, I volunteered extensively in my community and in my church, as well as owning and operating the family farm and a trucking business.

The last 11 years I have served as a school trustee for the Red Deer Catholic Regional School Division. I have also served three one-year terms as president

reduce administrative overhead as much as possible and pushing resources where they're needed most — to the frontline teachers and to classrooms.

Our plan includes prioritizing funding for school infrastructure, and we will be building new schools.

We also want to conduct an audit on class size to determine what happened to previous funding dedicated to reducing class sizes.

As well, we have committed to proclaiming the *Education Act* and have it come into force by September 1 of this year, with minimal disruption to the overall system. We are currently working through the upcoming legislative agenda and will have more

Let's continue to put the children first and let's do the right things for the right reasons.

of the Alberta Catholic School Trustees Association and a year-and-a-half as national vice-president of the Canadian Catholic School Trustees Association. I bring that wealth of practical and proven leadership experience to my new role as minister.

I want to ensure that Alberta's education system lives up to the high expectations of our students and their families. Both as a trustee and as a candidate who spoke to many Albertans at their doorsteps, I heard about these expectations a great deal. Albertans are very invested in our education system!

As you know, our government has outlined a plan for improving educational outcomes. While these are still early days in terms of having real details, our overarching goals are clear.

We want to deliver the best possible education for our children.

Together, we need to find greater efficiencies in the system to ensure we are using our education dollars effectively and prudently. This means finding ways to

details in the coming weeks.

Another area of priority is getting the curriculum review right. That's why our platform committed to pausing the rushed implementation of the new curriculum to hear from a wide range of perspectives, including parents, teachers and subject matter experts. So please stay tuned for more information very soon.

Listening to you is also extremely important to me. I want to hear from each and every one of you about other areas that can be improved upon in our education system. You're on the front line. I believe that listening is one of my most important jobs, and I will keep the lines of communication open.

In conclusion, again, I thank you for your hard work, your commitment to your students and their families, and your contributions to your profession. Let's continue to put the children first and let's do the right things for the right reasons.

I look forward to working with you in the future. Thank you! ■



Delegates of ARA 2019 met for two days of speeches and policy debates at the Edmonton Convention Centre on May 18 and 19. Among the hot-button topics discussed were mandatory sex education, women in leadership and challenges facing teachers in rural Alberta.

KIM CLEMENT

Delegates overturn policy on mandatory sex education

Annual Representative Assembly deals with range of issues, including rural education, gender equity and vaping

Jonathan Teghtmeyer
ATA News Editor-in-Chief

Delegates to the Alberta Teachers' Association's 102nd Annual Representative Assembly would be forgiven if they felt a sense of déjà vu on Sunday evening.

A resolution on mandatory sex education featuring passionate, thoughtful debate, concluded with a close vote, much like last year (see inset). This year, however, the discussion resulted in a decision to affirm the rights of parents to exclude their children from instruction related to human sexuality.

One speaker said that a policy to mandate sex ed would drive some parents in her community to withdraw from public education, ultimately decreasing the level to which these students complete school.

"If we tell the Mennonite parents that sex education is mandatory, they will simply respond by pulling their children out of public school, and they will go back to being educated in the church basement by the girl who passed Grade 6," the speaker said.

Speakers arguing against the resolution were similarly passionate and well-prepared.

"Public education and the competencies students need to graduate with are a nexus of ideas where knowledge is built as a community and parental preference is part of a discussion, not a veto," said one delegate.

"Legislating the requirement that a parent can opt-out their child creates a state-sanctioned norm that censorship of certain topics within public institutions is acceptable, further undermines the professional judgment of teachers as educators and causes us to abandon the central purpose of public education."

Resolution 2-23, put forward by Westwind Local No. 12, was adopted. Because it takes a position that is contradictory to Resolution 2-15 of 2018, that policy will be struck from the Association's handbook.

Rural education and women in leadership

Another resolution that generated significant discussion related to funding for rural education. Resolution 3-27 called on the government to engage the ATA, school boards and the public in the development of a rural education strategy that would ensure that students continue to have access to high-quality education in rural areas.

The discussion was not divided, as all speakers spoke in favour of the motion, but it provided an opportunity for teachers to share their experiences.

"Rural Alberta is a war zone, and it's almost like Third World education, it is so different," said one speaker. "And if you don't believe me I would love for you to come out and do my job for a day, because I just want a prep period."

Delegates also passed three resolutions (2-13, 3-11, 3-17) related to women in leadership. For starters, the Status of Women Committee will be created and funded. And the Association will host a women's leadership symposium in the 2019/20 school year to promote gender equity and women's participation in all aspects of employment and Association life.

This issue has been discussed at ARA in previous years but failed to garner enough support to move forward. This time delegates supported the resolution after considerable debate.

"Not all women need supports, but some do. And those are the women I'm speaking for today," said one speaker.

"We need to make sure that we, as

a predominantly female organization, stand up and say, 'We count and we matter,'" said another.

Emergent resolutions

Two emergent resolutions were put forward by delegates from the floor of the assembly and passed with unanimous support.

Resolution 4-1 recommends that the Government of Alberta should amend provincial smoking legislation to regulate vaping products in the same way that tobacco is regulated. The mover from Calgary Public Local No. 38 noted that in response to growing vape use among students, the Alberta School Boards Association also recently passed policy calling for tighter regulation of vaping.

Resolution 4-2 responded to news items from earlier this year that some school boards were using employment contracts for teachers that contained overly restrictive Catholicity clauses. It urges the Government of Alberta to ensure that employment contracts do not infringe upon the individual human rights of a teacher.

Other resolutions

Delegates also supported a resolution supporting the collective bargaining rights of all unionized workers, including the ability to engage in fair arbitration free from government interference. Resolution 3-33 was put forward by Provincial Executive Council in response to news that the arbitration process being used to settle salaries for nurses in their negotiations with Alberta Health Services has been interrupted by the new government.

A number of PEC-sponsored resolutions passed by the Assembly focused on other issues brought up by the United Conservative Party in the

Reconciling resolutions

ARA 2018 passed Resolution 2-15/18:

Be it resolved that the Association urge the Government of Alberta to amend section 50.1(1) of the School Act to mandate that all K-12 students, without exception, who attend schools that receive public funding complete the human sexuality component of the relevant program of studies.

ARA 2019 passed Resolution 2-23/19:

Be it resolved that the Alberta Teachers' Association affirm and respect the right of individual parents to exclude their children from participation in instructional activities relating to human sexuality.

recent provincial election. Resolution 3-24 says that the government should ensure that legislative changes do not diminish protection provided to teachers and students who identify as sexual or gender minorities, including the rights of students related to GSAs.

One resolution called for education funding to account for inflationary and cost growth pressures, while another called for the full funding of student enrolment increases. Supports for inclusion, class size reduction, school nutrition programs and policies guiding teacher growth, supervision and evaluation also featured in other policy passed by the assembly. ■

See the text of highlighted resolutions on pages 7-8.

Education minister pledges to work with Alberta teachers

Opposition questions funding plans

Cory Hare
ATA News Managing Editor

Alberta's new education minister is pledging to work with the province's teachers to improve public education.

"It is very important to me that I get to know you, the people on the front lines. You've contributed so much to Alberta's education system, and I look forward to working with you to continue to bring quality education to Alberta's students," said Adriana LaGrange while addressing delegates of the Alberta Teachers' Association's Annual Representative Assembly on Saturday, May 18.

The former Catholic school trustee is now a first-time MLA representing Red Deer-North in the United Conservative Party government. In her role as minister, she said, it's very important to listen to teachers.

"I want to hear from each and every one of you about other areas that can be improved upon in our education system," LaGrange said. "I believe that listening is one of my most important jobs, and I will keep the lines of communication open."

Priorities

LaGrange said that among her priorities are to conduct an audit on class sizes, pause a rushed implementation of new curriculum and proclaim the *Education Act*.

This legislative move would replace the *School Act*, which contains a number of protections for sexual and gender minority students and staff, including making it illegal to "out" students who participate in gay-straight alliances.

ATA president Greg Jeffery said the issue is a concern for teachers.

"Teachers' primary concern is always the safety of students," he said.

In comments to media following her speech, LaGrange stressed that

"I am committed, as the minister of education, [to] providing the best possible education for our students, and that means putting teachers in front of students."

— Education Minister Adriana LaGrange



KIM CLEMENT

the UCP government will take care of gender and sexual minorities.

"As far as my government and myself, there is no question that we will have some of the strongest GSA-QSA inclusive education, inclusive clubs available to students. We are looking at protecting every student in our jurisdictions, so I disagree with that analysis," LaGrange said.

Jeffery stressed that education funding is the top issue on teachers' minds. "We're hearing rumours of cuts. Boards are making announcements of million-dollar reductions in their budgets, but it's all speculation at this point," he said. "We hope that we can change that before the provincial budget comes out in September."

Funding plans questioned

When asked about education funding, LaGrange repeated the UCP's campaign promise to maintain current

levels or increase funding by improving efficiency.

"I am committed, as the minister of education, [to] providing the best possible education for our students, and that means putting teachers in front of students," LaGrange said.

"I know there's always apprehension when a new government comes into play, but right now we are going to do the absolute best because we believe in having a strong, quality education for every single one of our students."

When pressed, LaGrange would not commit to funding for enrolment growth.

"We are currently reviewing all of the education funding, and at this point in time I'm not at liberty to say any more than that," she said. "I am very committed and my government's very committed to ensuring that we have adequate resources."

NDP education critic Sarah Hoffman

was on hand and questioned the government's fiscal prudence.

"When the government campaigned on bringing forward this big corporate tax cut, and they still didn't plan on balancing the budget any earlier than we would have, they have to find that money somewhere, and of course the usual targets are health care and education," Hoffman said.

The government plans to reduce the corporate tax rate from the current 12 per cent to eight per cent by 2020. The first in a planned series of tax cuts will take effect July 1.

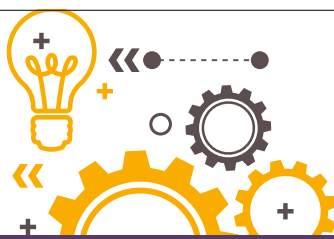
Hoffman said her priority is to advocate for reasonable class sizes, adequate supports for students with learning disabilities and "that parents aren't asked to pay exorbitant school fees."

"These are some of the things that we're nervous will be coming given the kinds of promises that have been made by the new government," she said. ■



This...

from ATA President Greg Jeffery



Reflections on ARA

Well, folks, the Annual Representative Assembly has come and gone for another year, and there will be much to do as we move into the first sitting of our new legislature and, of course, the end of the school year.

But before all that, I have a few reflections on this just-completed assembly. While it did not have some of the controversies of ARAs past, there are things worth noting. The education minister was not nearly as provoking as some we have had in the past, but there is one piece of her address that I want to comment on. Ms. LaGrange mentioned the government plans to proclaim the *Education Act*, a piece of legislation left over from the former PC government. With this act replacing the *School Act*, there are not a lot of changes, but one piece

It was a great weekend of work and socializing, and now we all get back to working to improve and enhance public education for all Albertans.

that warrants mention is the loss of the provisions of Bill 24. Bill 24 prevented teachers from having to disclose to parents the participation of their child in a GSA/QSA. The clarity of this act was appreciated by most of us, and we will pursue the changes required to re-embed these securities in the new act.

This issue of the *ATA News* will be full of policy changes and revisions, but highlights for me were

the honorary presentations. They were awarded to Frank Bruseker and posthumously to Alexandra Jurisic. I worked with both on Council, and they richly deserved their honours. There was one more item I want to mention, and that was the goodbye to our past president, Mark Ramsankar. I was privileged to make this presentation, and the ovation from the assembly indicated that my good friend was truly the "people's president."

It was a great weekend of work and socializing, and now we all get back to working to improve and enhance public education for all Albertans. The end of my term is in sight, but there is still much to be done. I'll speak to all of you again before the end of June. ■

Teachers need to fight for what is right

President Greg Jeffery delivers farewell message

ARA 2019

Cory Hare
ATA News Managing Editor

In the coming years, Alberta teachers will need to raise their voices in order to preserve and enhance the teaching and learning conditions that they now enjoy.

That was the message delivered by Alberta Teachers' Association president Greg Jeffery during his speech to delegates of the Annual Representative Assembly on Saturday, May 18.

As an example of the impact teachers can have by speaking up, Jeffery outlined how teachers contributed to a decision by the United Conservative Party to back away from election platform planks calling for a return of Grade 3 Provincial Achievement Tests and 50 per cent weighting for diploma exams.

"Midway through the campaign, after hearing from many, many teachers on the doorsteps and at forums, the UCP stepped back from these two positions," Jeffery said. "The election has shown us that, while these policy positions of our new government are not yet written in stone, it will take a concerted effort by all Alberta teachers, along with trustees and parents, to preserve and enhance that which we now enjoy."

Jeffery noted that the government isn't backing off from its plans to proclaim the *Education Act*, a change that will negate the *School Act*, which contains a number of protections for sexual and gender minorities, including making it illegal to "out" students who participate in gay-straight alliances. The government also remains committed to slowing down the rollout of new curriculum.



KIM CLEMENT

Parting words

Greg Jeffery's speech at ARA 2019 was his last ARA address as ATA president. Vice-president Jason Schilling will take over as president on July 1 and Jeffery will assume the role of past president. Here is an excerpt of parting words from Jeffery's speech.

"As my term as your president comes to an end, I would be remiss if I did not take the opportunity to thank each and every one of you. You provided me with an experience that too few get to have.

"My predecessor and good friend Mark Ramsankar was, and still is, known for describing the presidency of the ATA as the best job he ever had. I always believed that there was a measure of hyperbole involved in those statements, but Mark was right and I was wrong. You know I don't make that last statement lightly, as I will hear about it for a long, long time. I didn't think anything could top my band room experiences, but advocating for the best teaching force on the planet was pretty darn cool.

"You gave me an opportunity that only 58 people have ever had, and I am thankful for that opportunity. Jason Schilling will serve in the grand tradition of the 58 before, and I am glad to have the opportunity to work along with him as we face the challenges ahead.

"I am a teacher — it's who I am. We are teachers — it's who we are. So let's ensure that future generations of Alberta teachers can be as proud of the work they will do as we are of the work we have done. Thank you for a great ride. I'm glad it's not over yet."

On the other hand, while the UCP's campaign also mentioned mandatory teacher testing and removing school leaders from Association membership, these aspects have been "neither confirmed nor denied."

"We must continue to stand up for public education in Alberta," Jeffery said, "to fight for what is right for our students and to fiercely protect a system and an organization that are the envy of the world." ■

CTF president aims comments at minister

ATA News Staff

In his address to ARA delegates, Canadian Teachers' Federation president Mark Ramsankar (also ATA past president) warned of a "disturbing trend" across Canada of newly elected conservative governments eroding public education through inadequate funding and removing safeguards for gender and sexual minorities.

"Here in Alberta we have a newly-elected government. I look forward to the fact that it has its sights set on public education. Truly, we await their approach. Many think that it might not be pretty and ... I know Alberta teachers are bracing themselves," said Ramsankar.

He drew enthusiastic applause with a direct appeal to Education Minister Adriana LaGrange, who was sitting nearby.

"Miss minister, I'm calling on you right here to work with this Association, to work with the profession on all decisions that impact who we are and what has always made Alberta the best education system in the world," Ramsankar said.

He stressed the need for teachers to stand up for all students and alluded to the government's plans to remove protections making it illegal to "out" students who participate in gay-straight alliances.

"We will push back on any government across this country that finds it acceptable to out children and gain public favour." ■

ATA prepares for uncertain future

Mark Milne
ATA News Staff

Teachers realized some significant gains this past year, but with a new government in Alberta, a reformed political perspective on public education has also been ushered in, said executive secretary Dennis Theobald.

Speaking to delegates of the Annual Representative Assembly, Theobald indicated that while core issues such as class size and funding for inclusive learning continue to plague the teaching profession, there are many new challenges on the horizon now that the United Conservative Party is in government.

"Our path forward is not entirely clear," Theobald said.

Theobald drew attention to teachers' recently ratified central table bargaining agreement and cautioned that recent developments involving the United Nurses of Alberta indicate a showdown may be brewing for teachers' salary arbitration.

"Members will be aware that, acting upon instructions of government,

“ Within this year we will be preparing to bargain once more at the central table but under even less favourable political and economic circumstances. ”

— ATA executive secretary Dennis Theobald

Alberta Health Services has refused to engage in the salary arbitration provided for in its multi-year collective agreement with the United Nurses of Alberta," Theobald said.

The ATA is currently preparing for salary arbitration that is slated to begin in September, as agreed to during central table bargaining. Theobald informed delegates that the UNA will



KIM CLEMENT

be going before the Labour Relations Board on May 31 to uphold their right to free and fair arbitration as provided for in their collective agreement.

"In doing so, they are defending the rights of all unionized public sector workers in this province. Their struggle is our struggle and the Alberta Teachers' Association stands beside the United Nurses of Alberta in this," he said.

Preparing for an uncertain future was an underlying theme throughout Theobald's address, which also drew attention to potential difficulties for teachers in future negotiations.

"Within this year we will be preparing to bargain once more at the central table," he said, "but under even less favourable political and economic circumstances." ■

Former president urges teachers to help their MLAs

Frank Bruseker preaches activism in accepting honorary membership

Kim Clement
ATA News Staff



Alberta's political sphere has undergone a "seismic shift" and teachers need to help shape the province by encouraging their MLAs to exercise moral courage.

This was the message shared by former president Frank Bruseker at the Annual Representative Assembly on May 18 while accepting an honorary membership in the Alberta Teachers' Association.

In his acceptance speech, Bruseker noted that the core values behind teachers' code of professional conduct are the same values that make for a successful elected official: honesty, respect, responsibility, fairness and compassion. These values can be summed up as moral courage, which helps leaders determine what is important and guides them in their decision making, Bruseker said.

"I'd suggest that these five values are important for teachers, obviously ... but they're important for MLAs, cabinet ministers and they're important for premiers," Bruseker said.

With many in the UCP government being new to the role of MLA, Bruseker called on ARA delegates to meet with their local MLA.

"At the end of this ARA, new resolutions will come out in the *Members' Handbook*, and those are the statements that we as a profession collectively hold together ... so the members of the legislative assembly should be looking at our *Members' Handbook*."

“ At the end of this ARA, new resolutions will come out in the *Members' Handbook*, and those are the statements that we as a profession collectively hold together ... so the members of the legislative assembly should be looking at our *Members' Handbook*. ”

— Honorary membership recipient Frank Bruseker

'Ferocious' and 'relentless'

Bruseker was one of two recipients of an honorary membership, which the ATA bestows annually on someone who has made a significant contribution

to the practice of teaching and public education in Alberta. The other honorary membership was awarded posthumously to Alexandra Jurisic, former member of Provincial Executive Council, who died in March 2018.

Before presenting Bruseker with the award, ATA vice-president Jenny Regal described him as "ferocious" and "relentless." She noted Bruseker's long history of advocacy on behalf of teachers, (and all Albertans), in his roles as MLA, member of Provincial Executive Council and three terms as ATA president.

An MLA from 1989 to 1997, Bruseker was known as a fierce critic of then premier Ralph Klein. In 1997, after losing his legislature seat, Bruseker returned to teaching in Calgary and became involved in Association politics.

"That defeat was our gain," Regal said.

Bruseker ran for Provincial Executive Council and served as Calgary City district representative for two terms (1999–2003) and ATA president for three terms (2003–2009). In his time as president, Bruseker's magnum opus was to resolve teachers' \$2.1 billion unfunded pension liability through careful and strategic negotiation with government. The resolution of this issue saved Alberta taxpayers \$42 billion.

Upon accepting his award, Bruseker said it was a special moment for him, and he was very humbled to be honoured alongside the other ATA award recipients, Alexandra Jurisic and Gene Zwozdesky.

"Part of the reason this is humbling is when I look at the other award recipients today ... I call them friends, I call them colleagues and it's an honour to be presented honorary membership beside such wonderful individuals," Bruseker said. ■



Honorary membership

AWARDED POSTHUMOUSLY

Former ATA vice-president Alexandra Jurisic was recognized at ARA by being posthumously awarded an honorary membership. Jurisic died in March 2018 after a battle with cancer. Her widow Sheila Mansell accepted the award.

“ She was the whole package — fiercely intelligent, accomplished, driven and boundlessly inquisitive, and absolutely in your corner. ”

— Sheila Mansell, widow

Alexandra
JURISIC

HONEST

Teacher **Committed**

Intuitive
RELENTLESS

Mentor
Friend

Courageous
ANALYTICAL

Empathetic

Astute

Intelligent

MENTOR

INSPIRATIONAL STRONG

— Jason Schilling, ATA vice-president

“ Alexandra was a voice for social justice for all, including some of the most marginalized students we work with. She was also a promoter of research-driven excellence in teaching and learning. Many of us who had the fortune to cross paths with Alexandra continue to be strongly influenced by her commitment and strength of conviction. ”

— Jason Schilling, ATA vice-president

Involvement highlights

Provincial Executive Council, vice-president	2007–2009
ATA Local No. 55, president	2001–2007 2013–2017
Member of Second Languages and Intercultural Council, Council for School Leadership, and Diversity, Equity and Human Rights Committee	
As vice-president, Jurisic was a member of the team that resolved the long-standing unfunded liability issue with the teachers' pension.	

ARA 2019 Highlighted resolutions

Local resolutions

2-1/19

Edmonton Public Teachers

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge that funds held in trust for the benefit of teachers by the Alberta Teachers' Retirement Fund be listed in an accessible manner.

2-3/19

Edmonton Public Teachers

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Government of Alberta to require that all staff, except those presenting valid medical exemptions, working in publicly funded K-12 schools and district sites which receive public funds be vaccinated.

2-4/19

Edmonton Public Teachers

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association petition the Canadian Teachers' Federation to urge the Government of Canada to immediately ensure clean drinking water is available to all communities in Canada.

2-5/19

Edmonton Public Teachers

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Canadian Teachers' Federation to advocate for the right to clean drinking water in all Canadian communities.

2-7/19

Edmonton Public Teachers

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Government of Alberta to amend the Alberta Certificate of High School Achievement requirements as follows:

10 CREDITS IN ANY COMBINATION FROM

- 30-level Knowledge and Employability occupational course, or
- Advanced level (3000 series) in Career and Technology Studies courses, or
- 30-level locally developed course with an occupational focus, or
- 30-level Knowledge and Employability Workplace Practicum course, or
- 30-level Work Experience course, or
- 30-level Green Certificate course, or
- Special Projects 30

2-8/19

Edmonton Public Teachers

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association

urge the Government of Alberta to exempt students with English as an additional language (EAL), benchmarked below ESL proficiency level 4, from Grade 6 and 9 provincial achievement tests.

2-9/19

Edmonton Public Teachers

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Government of Alberta to change the practice of assigning a score of zero to students who are exempt from writing provincial achievement tests.

2-11/19

Edmonton Public Teachers

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association bargain on to the list of all matters paid leave for teachers to celebrate their religious and cultural holidays.

2-13/19

Edmonton Public Teachers

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association create a status of women committee.

2-15/19

Edmonton Public Teachers

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the provincial and federal governments to pass legislation that would make it unlawful for benefit providers to reduce or eliminate the life insurance payout to beneficiaries when the covered member is over age 65 and still employed by their school authority or government department.

2-16/19

Edmonton Public Teachers

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge preservice institutions in Alberta to require that all preservice teachers receive education in Indigenous peoples' histories as founding nations.

2-17/19

Edmonton Public Teachers

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge preservice institutions in Alberta to require that all preservice teachers receive education in antiracism as it relates to all cultures and cultural minorities.

2-18/19

Edmonton Public Teachers

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association display the Canadian flag, Alberta flag, Treaty 6 flag and Métis flag at Barnett House.

2-23/19

Westwind

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association affirm and

respect the right of individual parents to exclude their children from participation in instructional activities relating to human sexuality.

2-24/19

Parkland Teachers'

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association promote gender equity in underrepresented areas within the profession.

2-25/19

Parkland Teachers'

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association study and report on changing the term length of elected Provincial Executive Council positions, with a report made available by October 1, 2019.

2-31/19

Rocky View

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge school authorities to designate days in lieu for teachers where parent-teacher interviews and student-led conferences are held outside of school hours.

2-32/19

Rocky View

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Government of Alberta to provide funding for the purposes of providing lunch supervisors so that teachers can have a 30-minute, duty-free break.

2-33/19

Pembina Hills

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association explore ways to educate members about the budget and budget processes.

2-34/19

Pembina Hills

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association engage in a full review of budgeting processes.

2-35/19

Pembina Hills

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association negotiate with the Government of Alberta to remove the 0.6 FTE limit on work when holding a teaching contract and in receipt of an Alberta Teachers' Retirement Fund pension.

2-36/19

Northern Spirit

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge school boards and the Government of Alberta to provide funding to teachers for self-directed professional development, particularly for teachers in rural and remote locations.

2-37/19

Northern Spirit

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Government of Alberta and school boards to provide time, inservice and resources for the new curriculum before implementation.

2-38/19

Northern Spirit

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Government of Alberta to ensure that 24-hour emergency mental health services for children are available across the province.

2-39/19

Edmonton Catholic Teachers

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Government of Alberta to take over the operation of 2Learn.ca in order to begin actively developing and reorganizing its online teaching resources to reflect the new curricula.

2-40/19

Edmonton Catholic Teachers

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Government of Alberta to amend the *Public Education Collective Bargaining Act* to allow for more matters with a cost to be placed on the local list, and to that end, that the Central Table Bargaining Committee be enabled to bargain a percentage of money to be made available to support locals in achieving their local table issues.

2-41/19

Edmonton Catholic Teachers

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge Alberta school boards to provide inclusive education and sensitivity training for staff regarding the creation of safe, caring and welcoming environments for people of all sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions.

Provincial Executive Council resolutions

3-1/19

Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED, that item 9 of the Declaration of Rights and Responsibilities for Teachers be amended to read—

9 Teachers have the right to be protected against discrimination on the basis of prejudice as to race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, physical characteristics, disability, marital status, family status, age, ancestry, place of origin, place of residence,

Resolutions approved at ARA 2019

socioeconomic background or linguistic background and have the responsibility to refrain from [practicing] **practising** these forms of discrimination in their professional duties.

3-2/19 Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge Alberta Education to maintain the requirement for a social studies Grade 12-level course for high school graduation.

3-5/19 Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED, that students in public education be free from commercial exploitation.

3-6/19 Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED, that parents and community are essential partners in public education.

3-10/19 Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association provide funds to implement recommendations from the Committee on Understanding Aggression(s) in Alberta Schools and School Communities.

3-11/19 Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association provide funds to establish a Status of Women Committee.

3-13/19 Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association provide funds for a research project to inform the Association's advocacy on behalf of teachers and school leaders by documenting the impact of the new professional practice standards.

3-17/19 Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association host a women's leadership symposium in the 2019/20 school year to promote gender equity and women's participation in all aspects of employment and Association life.

3-19/19 Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED, that the 2019/20 proposed budget be increased by \$5,000 to provide for a subsidy to Summer Conference delegates incurring adult dependent-care expenses above and beyond regular care with an attested claim and original, detailed receipts.

3-20/19 Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Government of Alberta to ensure that, if approvals are granted to school jurisdictions, under occupational health and safety (OH&S) legislation, allowing jurisdictions to have one divisional safety committee, oversight measures are put in place to ensure that joint work site health and safety committees provide a mechanism for all workers to be meaningfully involved in OH&S matters.

3-23/19 Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED, that school authorities should collaborate with the Alberta Teachers' Association to develop and implement policies requiring parents to disclose to teachers and other staff when a student has been provided a surveillance device and governing the use of such devices in schools.

3-24/19 Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Government of Alberta should ensure that changes in legislation respecting education do not diminish

1. the protection provided to teachers and other school authority employees against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression;
2. the right or ability of students to establish and name gay-straight/queer-straight alliances in their schools; or
3. the right or ability of individual students to determine if and how their membership or participation in the activities of a gay-straight/queer-straight alliance in their schools is disclosed to other persons.

3-25/19 Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Government of Alberta should increase education grant rates on an ongoing basis to compensate for the effects of past and future general inflation and specific cost increases affecting the operations and infrastructure of public, separate and francophone school authorities.
CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

3-26/19 Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Government of Alberta should increase education funding to public, separate and francophone school authorities to fully fund increases in enrolment.
CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

3-27/19 Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Government of Alberta should engage the Alberta Teachers' Association, school boards, superintendents, parents and the public in the development of a rural education strategy to ensure that students in rural areas continue to have access to high-quality education opportunities provided by public, separate and francophone school authorities.

3-28/19 Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Government of Alberta should engage the Alberta Teachers' Association, school boards, superintendents, parents and the public in the development of an inclusive education strategy to ensure that students with exceptionalities and their teachers are provided with appropriate supports.

3-29/19 Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Government of Alberta should engage the Alberta Teachers' Association, school boards, superintendents, parents and the public in the development of a class-size reduction strategy to ensure that class sizes support optimal teaching and learning.
CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

3-30/19 Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Government of Alberta should expand school nutrition programs to ensure that all students who are

economically disadvantaged are well-fed and ready to learn.

3-31/19 Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED, that any new policy implemented by the Government of Alberta concerning teacher evaluation should respect teacher professionalism and comport with the philosophy and direction of the Teaching Quality Standard (2019); Alberta's Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy 2.1.5; and section 4(b)(vii) of the *Teaching Profession Act*.

3-33/19 Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association supports the collective bargaining rights of all unionized workers, including the ability to engage in fair arbitration free from government interference.
CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Assembly resolutions

4-1/19 Calgary Public Teachers

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Government of Alberta should amend the *Tobacco and Smoking Reduction Act* to regulate vaping products in the same way as the act regulates tobacco products.
CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

4-2/19 Edmonton Public Teachers

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Government of Alberta to ensure employment contracts do not infringe upon the individual human rights of a teacher.
CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Policy review completed

The Association undertook a major review of its policy in response to a 2016 Annual Representative Assembly resolution calling on the organization to modernize, rationalize and consolidate its accumulated policy. Outdated policies were deleted, overlapping policies were consolidated, and all policies were edited for clarity and ease of reading. These activities reduced the number of policies from 1,044 to 971 and the number of words from 46,703 to 39,592.

Representing the official end of this review, Resolution 3-3 replaced the previous policy with the updated version.

3-3/19 Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED, that the administrative and educational policy contained in the 2018/19 *Members' Handbook* be repealed and replaced with the Administrative and Educational Policy of the Alberta Teachers' Association submitted to the 2019 Annual Representative Assembly.

Fee increases by 1.9 per cent

Annual fee will increase by \$24 to \$1,266

ARA 2019

Pedro Carriel
ATA Treasurer and
Chief Financial Officer

Over the May long weekend, delegates attending the 102nd Annual Representative Assembly (ARA) in Edmonton approved the budget for the 2019/20 fiscal year, resulting in a revised fee of \$1,266 per year for a full-time teacher. This translates to a fee increase of \$24, or \$2 per month.

The assembly approved funds to support a number of new initiatives. While some programs have been discontinued, compared to the 2018/19 budget, overall expenditures are expected to increase by 1.58 per cent. Planned revenue increases in categories such as membership and registration fees, food services and facility rental, and tenant leases will help fund the targeted increase in spending.

Faced with a substantial increase in both the number and the complexity of professional conduct cases, ARA delegates voted in support of increasing the Member Services staffing complement by two, adding an executive staff position and also a professional staff role. Furthermore, to respond to increased demands for services and to better engage with and support members, an increase of 0.3 FTE (full-time equivalent) was approved to aid with discipline and translation and an 0.5 FTE added to increase graphic design capacity.

The 2019/20 budget included a proposed reduction to the annual amount

Faced with a substantial increase in both the number and the complexity of professional conduct cases, ARA delegates voted in support of increasing the Member Services staffing complement by two, adding an executive staff position and also a professional staff role.



Delegates line up to express their views during ARA 2019.

allocated to the specialist council grant. After productive discussions and voting, delegates chose to leave the annual amount unchanged, and thus it will remain at \$870,000 for the 2019/20 fiscal year.

In addition to approving a women's conference and allocating resources to implement and prioritize the recommendations of the governance review currently underway, delegates approved funding for a status of women committee, which will support the ATA in implementing programs and policies to enhance gender equality and women's participation in all aspects of member involvement.

Also, expenditures were approved to provide support to school leaders to enhance their capacity to ensure the occupational health and safety of staff and to fund a research study focused on teachers' experiences with the implementation of the revised Teaching Quality Standard and Leadership Quality Standard.

Moreover, delegates approved a program of support for school leaders and member teachers with jurisdiction-level assignments to enhance their capacity in instructional supervision and grow their ability to work effectively

and collaboratively with teachers, while fulfilling their roles as defined in the *School Act* and related regulations.

In addition to specific programs that are expected to conclude at the end of the current year, the proposed discontinuation of funding of 2Learn.ca was approved by delegates.

At the conclusion of a productive long weekend of debate, delegates approved an overall budget with a deficit of \$56,200 (equivalent to 0.13 per cent of budgeted revenues). The annual fee for associate members will increase to \$189.90. ■

ARA on camera



Zwozdesky honoured posthumously

Jen Janzen
ATA News Staff

Learn everything, because no one can ever take away your education. It was Gene Zwozdesky's favourite aphorism, and it was also the way he lived, said his wife Christine Zwozdesky. Zwozdesky's passion for education was recognized at the Annual Representative Assembly as he was posthumously awarded the Association's Public Education Award.

"Like many of you as educators, he inspired many students," Christine told the delegates as she accepted the award on Zwozdesky's behalf.

Zwozdesky died Jan. 6 after a short battle with cancer. He was 70.

First elected to the legislature in 1993, Zwozdesky was education minister from 2004 to 2005. Although his time in the post was brief, he immediately focused on relationship-building between the ministry and the Alberta Teachers' Association.

President Greg Jeffery said the political climate of the time was fraught with challenges: the first teachers' strike in decades had occurred in 2002, class sizes were growing, more standardized testing was being considered and there was a continued threat to remove principals from the ATA.

By the end of 2003, said Jeffery, it seemed there would be no way to reconcile the differences between Alberta Education and the ATA.

"Then along came Gene," Jeffery said.

Zwozdesky's own teaching experience (as well as teaching high school in Edmonton, he was a long-time Ukrainian language and dancing instructor) gave him "a fundamental understanding of the complexity of the education system," Jeffery said.

"But more importantly," he added, "[Zwozdesky] had a profound respect for the work of teachers."

Zwozdesky's background and continuous involvement in the arts inspired him to advocate for a new



Christine Zwozdesky (left), widow of former education minister Gene Zwozdesky, accepts an honorary membership awarded posthumously to Zwozdesky, who died in January 2019 after a battle with cancer.

“ Gene was a musician, a dancer, a tireless volunteer, an entrepreneur and a politician, but he was first and last a teacher. ”

— ATA president Greg Jeffery

arts curriculum. He also created the High School Completion Strategic Framework.

After accepting the award, Christine Zwozdesky said, although her husband left the classroom in the early 1990s, teaching was still important to him.

"Every facet of his life continued to involve teaching in some way," she said, whether he was serving on a committee for multicultural identity or teaching his grandchildren to count in several languages.

She thanked the Association for recognizing her husband.

"Gene would be honoured and humbled to be remembered in this way by his peers," she said.

It's a fitting award for such a widely influential person, said Jeffery.

"Gene was a musician, a dancer, a tireless volunteer, an entrepreneur and a politician, but he was first and last a teacher. Gene's legacy to the teachers of this province lives on today, and his impact will be felt for years to come."

Gene Zwozdesky

Quick facts

- Received bachelor's degrees in arts and education from the University of Alberta
- Taught at Victoria Composite High School and Balwin Junior High, both located in Edmonton
- Worked as a teacher, administrator, professional musician and business owner
- Executive director of the Alberta Cultural Heritage Foundation, the Alberta Ukrainian-Canadian Centennial Commission, and music director for the Shumka Dancers and Cheremosh Dancers
- Elected as Liberal MLA in 1993; crossed the floor to the Progressive Conservatives in 1998
- Held ministerial posts in health and wellness, Aboriginal relations, education, and community development
- Served as speaker from 2012 to 2015
- Defeated in the 2015 provincial election by the NDP's Denise Woollard

Twitter reaction

Dave Hancock @DaveHancockPCJ
It was nice to see Gene Zwodezky so admirably honoured at #ARA2019, a beautiful soul that was an active Albertan, father, husband and teacher.

ECTLocal54Preident @SFEposito

A wonderful tribute — ATA Public Education Award to a great man — former min. of education, speaker of the house, Shumka dancer, musician, band teacher, honorary chief of two nations, and always a teacher!



ATA president Greg Jeffery recognized the end of Mark Ramsankar's term as past president by presenting him with a trophy identifying as "The People's President."

Tips for new parents and contract teachers

ATA Teacher Welfare

As of March 17, 2019, parents can receive extra weeks of employment insurance (EI) parental benefits so that they can share the joy and work of raising their children more equally.

These extra weeks are available to parents of children **born or placed with them for the purpose of adoption on or after March 17, 2019**, as long as they share parental benefits.

When parents apply for and share parental benefits, they may be eligible for one of the following:

- **five extra weeks** of parental benefits when choosing the standard option or
- **eight extra weeks** of parental benefits when choosing the extended option.

For more information on these new parental benefits, visit the website of Employment and Social Development Canada at www.canada.ca.

Are you currently substitute teaching or teaching under a temporary or probationary contract of employment?

If the answer to this question is yes,

keeping a work log may help you qualify for regular employment insurance (EI) benefits when your employment comes to an end. Qualifying for regular benefits under EI regulations is contingent upon the following criteria:

1. Your employment contract as a teacher has ended and you are not in receipt of an employment offer for the next school year or benefit premium contributions for the summer.
2. You have not worked for at least seven consecutive days.
3. You have the required number of insured hours accumulated in the past 52 weeks to qualify for EI.

The Alberta Teachers' Association helps teachers with questions about EI benefits on a regular basis. Here are answers to some common questions.

How many hours do I need?

This depends on your teaching status and location within the province. It also depends on whether you are new to the workforce and if you've filed a previous EI claim. Check EI's website for the required number of hours in your particular circumstance.

What happens if my Record of Employment (ROE) does not have enough insured hours?

Keep your own records of hours worked, including preparation time before and after school, supervision and extracurricular time after school, and time spent marking assignments at home. Where possible, have your log book hours signed by a principal or other supervisor who can certify that these are hours you spent working. Although not a guarantee, this log book record can be helpful in your reconsideration request of a denied claim.

I am filling in for another teacher for a longer period of time. Could I use my plan book in place of the log book noted above?

Yes. Ensure that you record any time such as coaching, planning, marking or other assigned duties/professional responsibilities in the plan book. Have the administrator sign off on your time. Again, this can be helpful for your reconsideration request of a denied claim.

Should I apply anyway?

Unless you are extremely short on hours to qualify (100 or more), the Association usually recommends

applying regardless, as waiting too long to apply can be another reason your claim could be denied.

What if I am turned down?

Within the required timelines noted within your letter from EI, contact the Alberta Teachers' Association's Teacher Welfare program area for advice on the merits of filing a Request for Reconsideration of an Employment Insurance (EI) decision. You have 30 days from receipt of the Commission's decision(s) to submit a request for reconsideration in writing. For more information on the reconsideration process, please contact Teacher Welfare. In Edmonton and area, call 780-447-9400. From elsewhere in Alberta, call toll free at 1-800-232-7208.

For more information on employment insurance, visit the ATA's website (www.teachers.ab.ca) and click on Employment Insurance, located under Salary and Benefits, or call the EI general inquiries line at 1-800-206-7218. Apply for benefits online through the Government of Canada website at www.canada.ca.

Slapping a student is a serious offence



PITFALLS AND PRECAUTIONS

Cory Schoffer
ATA Secretary to Professional Conduct Committees

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.

At a recent hearing of the Professional Conduct Committee, the committee heard the case of a teacher who was charged with slapping a student in the face, thereby failing to maintain the honour and dignity of the profession and failing to treat the student with dignity and respect and being considerate of their circumstances.

The student had been involved in a series of confrontations on the playground during recess. During these confrontations, the student slapped other students' faces. As the children

were coming into the school at the end of recess, the student continued to be confrontational and defiant with the teacher. The student made several highly derogatory comments toward the teacher, including calling the teacher stupid. Ultimately, the student spat in the teacher's face. This prompted the teacher to respond instinctively, and she slapped the student. The teacher immediately took the now-crying student to the office and shared the entirety of the event with her principal.

The teacher was found guilty of unprofessional conduct on each of two charges, and received letters of severe reprimand for each charge, and fines totalling \$200. Failure to pay the fine in full within 30 days of receipt of the written decision of the hearing

committee will result in suspension of the teacher's membership in the Association.

Slapping a student is a serious offence and an aberrant response to a confrontation with a student. Safety and the well-being of students should be paramount for all teachers at all times. Though provoked, any physical interactions are not acceptable ways for a teacher to behave. Parents have a reasonable expectation that when they send their children to school they are going to be safe. Additionally, other students witnessed the interaction between the student and the teacher, thereby demeaning the student even further.

The committee did consider mitigating factors in their decision on penalty. These included the fact that the teacher had no prior incidents of unprofessional conduct, the teacher was remorseful and took full responsibility for her actions and reported her actions to her principal immediately, and the fact that being spat upon is not typical behaviour, nor is it something a teacher expects in their interactions with students.

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Teacher Growth, Supervision, Evaluation and Practice Review Workshop

A Workshop for Administrators

August 22–23, 2019 | Barnett House | Edmonton

This workshop focuses on the principal's critical role and the duties principals must perform as outlined in the *School Act* and the provincial Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy 2.1.5.

To register and for more information go to <https://event-wizard.com/TGSE0819/0/register>.

Deadline for registration is **August 16, 2019**.



The Alberta Teachers' Association

Exchanging Experiences 2019/20

Full-year and short-term exchanges for educators and administrators.

Travel, refresh and renew your commitment, passion and dedication to education and lifelong learning in a new and exciting environment!

Applications now open for teachers and school leaders in Alberta.

Destinations

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Applications at www.ieep.ca



100 Years of Subbing in Alberta book project

Book project seeks tales of substitute teaching. Alberta teachers are invited to contribute their real stories and experiences of substitute teaching for a book project entitled *100 Years of Subbing in Alberta*.

Stories can be submitted via email to info@ata38.ab.ca by July 31.

Please include your personal information. Photos are welcome.

For further information, please contact Marcheta Titterington: waywardwind4@live.com, 403-988-8236; or Penny Smith: oban2010mull@hotmail.com, 403-283-9260.

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE needs your voice

The Annual Representative Assembly approved the establishment of the Women in Leadership Committee and we are looking for three field members to share their voices.

Apply online now!

The complete application information is available on the ATA website. If you have any questions, please contact **Lindsay Yakimyshyn** at lindsay.yakimyshyn@ata.ab.ca, 780-447-9425 or 1-800-232-7208.

Application Deadline:

JUNE 30

Hoffman named education critic for opposition NDP

ATA News Staff

A familiar face will be keeping a close eye on the United Conservative Party's approach to public education. As of May 13, Edmonton-Glenora MLA Sarah Hoffman is the education critic for the Alberta NDP in their new role as the official opposition party. Hoffman is no stranger to the Alberta legislature, having previously served for four years in Rachel Notley's cabinet as health minister and deputy premier.

Hoffman comes from a legacy of educational professionals — her father was a principal and her mother an elementary teacher. The deep cuts to education during the 1990s were often a topic of heated discussion at home and piqued her interest in politics, according to a 2012 profile in *Illuminate*, a University of Alberta alumni publication.

Hoffman began her post-secondary education at Concordia University College, achieving a BA in religion and BSc in math. She then enrolled at the University of Alberta, completing a B.Ed. in secondary math and ultimately a master's in education, specializing in educational policy studies.

It was there she met retired professor and former leader of the provincial NDP, Raj Pannu. At his recommendation, Hoffman decided to actively pursue politics and, following university, landed a job as research



NDP education critic Sarah Hoffman

director for the Alberta New Democrat caucus.

Elected as a trustee to the Edmonton Public School Board in 2010, Hoffman assumed the role of vice-chair. In 2013, she was acclaimed to a second term on the board, where she held the role of chair until finally entering provincial politics in 2015.

During her tenure as health minister, Hoffman oversaw an increase to health-care funding, development of the Calgary Cancer Centre, banning of menthol tobacco products and a response to the province's deadly fentanyl crisis.

Hoffman received a standing ovation from delegates after she addressed the 98th Annual Representative Assembly in 2015, where she affirmed the NDP's commitment to inclusive education, adequate funding for enrollment growth and proper class size. ■



Understanding Conflict — A Communication Workshop

August 22–23, 2019

9 AM–3 PM | Barnett House, Edmonton, Alberta

Understanding Conflict is a communication and conflict-resolution workshop, offered by the Alberta Teachers' Association. The program is available to all active members and associate members. Workshop agenda topics include the following:

1. Understanding and defining conflict
2. Core conflict and complicating factors
3. Positions to interests
4. Clarifying skills, active listening and paraphrasing
5. Reframing and overcoming opposition
6. Dealing with anger
7. Establishing a safe and positive environment for conflict resolution
8. From solution to action

Registration is free to active ATA members and includes all resource materials, breakfast and lunch. Participants are responsible for travel and accommodation costs. Register online at www.tinyurl.com/ATA-HI2019. Space is limited.

Please note: There will be a \$25 charge for cancellations less than 48 hours in advance and no shows.

Registration deadline: July 31, 2019

For information, please contact Member Services at 1-800-232-7208 or ms@ata.ab.ca.

MS-HI-126



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Substitute Teachers' Conference

The Joy of Teaching

October 18 (eve)–19, 2019

Register online at <https://event-wizard.com/events/2019STC>

Registration deadline October 16, 2019

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For advertising information, contact the advertising manager: 780-447-9417 direct 1-800-232-7208 toll free email: advertising@ata.ab.ca.

Next Deadline Thursday, May 30, 2019, 4 p.m. (publication date June 11, 2019)

Please note: advertisers are encouraged to book their advertisement space early—space is limited.

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2018 Annual Report of the Alberta Teachers' Association

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 The Alberta Teachers' Association



The ATA Educational Trust

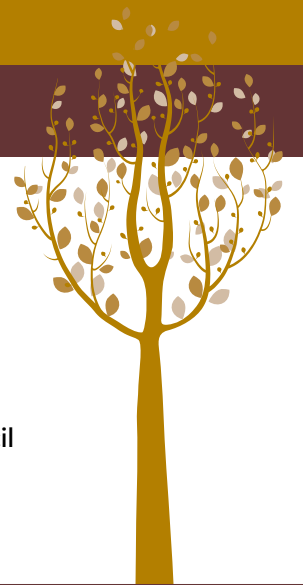
Supporting teachers' professional learning

This year, the ATA Educational Trust will award over \$90,000 for

- **\$600** grants to help teachers with attending a conference, workshop, seminar, institute or symposium; and
- **\$500** grants to help teachers attend an ATA specialist council conference or event. The names are chosen in a draw.

Grant application deadline: September 30

www.teachers.ab.ca > My ATA > Programs and Services > Grants, Awards and Scholarships > ATA Educational Trust



AR-ETF-25c 2019-05

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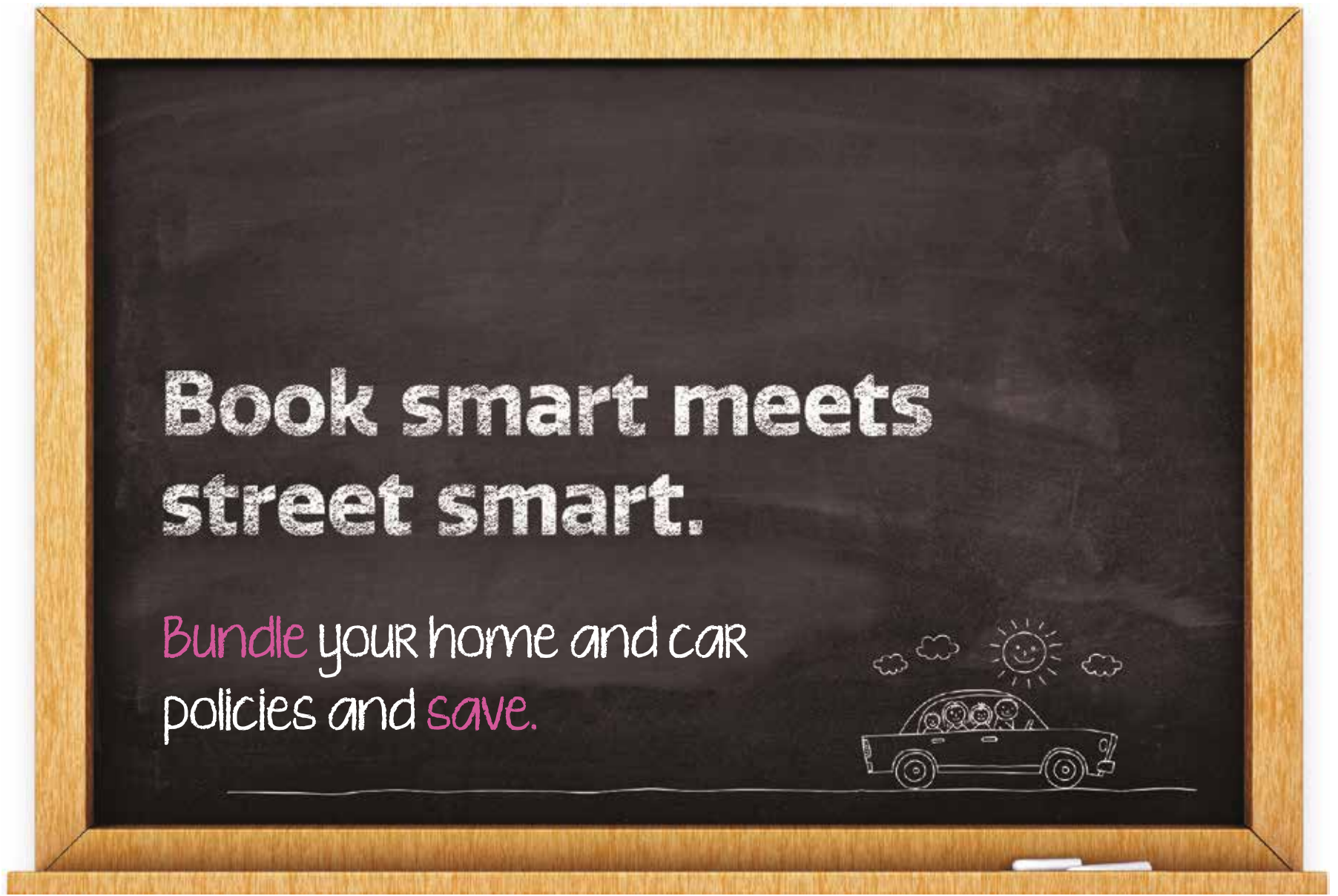
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TALENT

May 28, 2019 | Volume 53, Number 14

ARA 2019

The 102nd Annual Representative Assembly took place in Edmonton over the May long weekend. As well as dealing with ATA business such as the budget and policy, delegates experienced many amusing and poignant moments.



Heide Doppmieier

Fond farewells

ARA delegates paid tribute to former district representative Heide Doppmieier, who died earlier this year.

Also honoured with a standing ovation was Jere Geiger, a retiring district representative who is the longest serving PEC member in ATA history (22 years).

Also attending their last ARAs as PEC members were Mark Ramsankar, Markiana Cyncar-Hruschuk and Elaine Willette-Larsen.



MARK RAMSANKAR



MARKIANA CYNCAR-HRUSCHUK



ELAINE WILLETTE-LARSEN



KIM CLEMENT

Fellow PEC member Paul Froese hugs Jere Geiger during the standing ovation.

A gavel for Greg



In accordance with a long-standing ATA tradition, past president Mark Ramsankar presented outgoing president Greg Jeffery with a gavel as a symbol of Jeffery's leadership. Ramsankar used two words to encapsulate Jeffery's leadership style: wisdom and patience.

Ramsankar also pointed out that Jeffery is currently the second longest serving member of Provincial Executive Council.

"It's nice to have your obituary read in front of your peers while you're still here," he quipped to Jeffery.

Overheard at ARA

"At least the assembly is not interfering with the watching of the two Alberta NHL teams in the playoffs. Old habits do die hard; however, as you note that we still do not seat Calgary City and Edmonton McMurray delegations in adjoining sections."

— ATA president Greg Jeffery

"In my work life, I've specialized in dealing with behaviour problems, which I think will come in quite handy in my new political life."

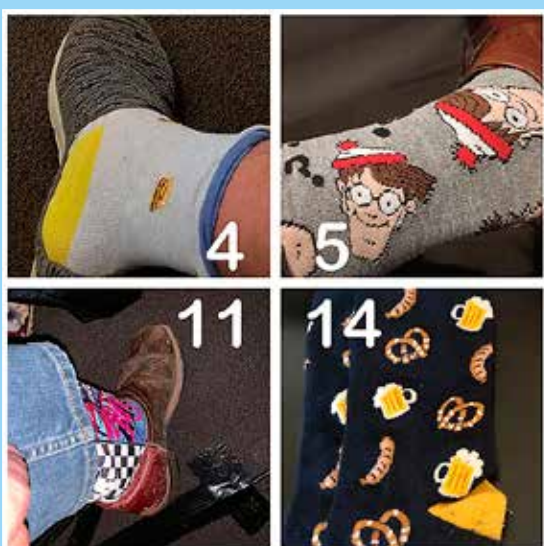
— Education Minister Adriana LaGrange

"As we all know, the greatest formula for success would be turning simple base metals into gold. So my question is: of the over 100 employees at ATRF, how many are alchemists?"

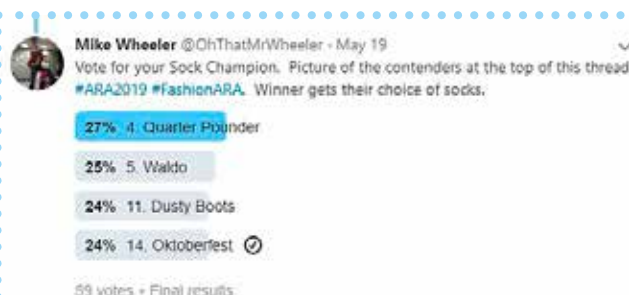
— Scott Onuczko, Parkland Local No. 10

Much ado about socks

In recent years, Timberline Local No. 9 delegate Mike Wheeler has run a Twitter-based competition centred around the hashtag #fashionARA. This year the competition was for "Sock Champion."



A series of elimination rounds produced four finalists and an eventual winner: "Quarter Pounder." The winning delegate left before claiming his prize or even giving his name (his Twitter handle is @cleveterinarian).



KIM CLEMENT

ATA staff officer Dave Matson (left), runner-up in the Sock Champion competition, accepts his prize from organizer Mike Wheeler.