



# Backgrounder

---

The Alberta Teachers' Association

2012 11 30

## **Status of Collective Bargaining**

- Collective agreements for teachers in Alberta are bargained locally between individual school boards and The Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) through its bargaining units.
- In November 2007, the provincial ATA and the government reached an agreement to settle an unfunded liability in the teachers' pension plan. That agreement established a process for settling all collective agreements in the province through to the end of the 2011–12 school year. Teacher salary rates for the last four years of the agreement were based on the increases in the *Alberta Average Weekly Earnings Index*.
- Teachers have been working without a collective agreement in place since September 2012.

## **A brief history of tripartite discussions**

- Tripartite discussions refer to the process whereby the Government of Alberta, the ATA and the Alberta School Boards' Association discuss the potential development of a provincial framework agreement to guide local bargaining.
- Discussions were first initiated by the Government of Alberta under then-minister Dave Hancock in the fall of 2010 to address declining government revenue and to develop strategy for transforming Alberta's education system.
- Initial discussions were concluded in January 2011 when then-Premier Ed Stelmach announced his resignation.
- Discussions resumed under then-Minister Thomas Lukaszuk in the fall of 2011. Those negotiations ended when an agreement was not concluded before the 2012 provincial budget.
- Discussions in the most recent round began in July 2012 under Minister Jeff Johnson.
- The ATA bargaining team has participated in more than 60 meetings over the three rounds including over 20 meetings in the most recent set of discussions.

## **At issue for Alberta teachers**

- The Association is seeking the implementation of improved conditions for professional practice that would enable teachers to focus on meeting the complex needs of individual students in today's increasingly diverse classrooms.

## Highlights of the Proposal

### Term:

- Four years from 2012 09 01–2016 08 31.

### Teacher Compensation:

- Salary grid and allowance rate increases of:
  - 0% effective 2012 09 01
  - 0% effective 2013 09 01
  - 1% effective 2014 09 01
  - 3% effective 2015 09 01.
- Increases applied to salary rates for boards below provincial average to bring them equal to provincial average effective 2013 02 01 (total cost in 2012–13 of 0.15%).
- Other enhancements to be negotiated locally and not to exceed a total cost of 1% of the base instructional grant over the four years.

### Conditions of Practice:

- Government and school board initiated tasks teachers are required to perform to be modified, reduced or dropped.
- Research study on teacher work.
- Establishment of a Teacher Development and Practice Council to advise the Minister on matters of concern to the teaching profession.
- Ministerial Order on teacher work:
  - School jurisdictions and government make best efforts over the term to reduce tasks currently performed.
  - Progress is made toward the established norms of 907 hours of instruction and 1,200 hours of assigned time in each school year, but providing for increased time when required.
  - Lieu time for administrators, counselors and others who are required to work more days than required by law.
  - Guaranteed PD time within existing allocations to focus on teacher identified priorities.
- Tripartite Framework Committee to take a lead in change management.
- Opportunities to proceed with pilot projects on *Inspiring Education*.
- Hours of work/minutes of instruction clauses in effect in 2011–12 to be extended.

Local Bargaining:

- Local bargaining to proceed on any items, but only items in a streamlined list can be brought to arbitration.

Local Dispute Resolution:

- Voluntary Interest Arbitration, as defined in the *Labour Relations Code* to resolve outstanding issues that cannot be settled by 2013 06 30, within a cost containment structure.

Ratification:

- Acceptance by the Government of Alberta, including Treasury Board, by 2012 12 07.
- Best efforts to get school boards and ATA bargaining units to agree.
- Ratification by all 62 individual school boards and bargaining units by 2013 02 15 or agreement is terminated and local bargaining resumes in all 62 school boards.

Arbitration:

- Dispute with tripartite agreement itself may be settled by arbitration.

Other Obligations:

- Increases to base instruction grants for school boards to be set at 1%, 2%, 2% and 4% over the four-year period.
- No changes to legislation, regulation or policy related to teachers' employment, ATA membership, bargaining rights or Board of Reference.
- Maintenance of the Class Size Initiative.
- Immediate termination of agreement if above obligations are not met or changed.
- ATA to work with government to expedite the process for journeymen to become active members of the profession.

## Information on Teacher Salary

	Proposed Salary Increases	GOA proposed grant rate increases for school boards	GOA Budget 2012 estimates for Alberta Consumer Price Index	GOA Budget 2012 estimates for Alberta Average Weekly Earnings
2012/13	0%*	1%	2.5%	4.2%
2013/14	0%	2%	2.3%	4.1%
2014/15	1%	2%	2.3%	4.1%
2015/16	3%	4% (ATA proposal)	2.3%	4.2%
<b>Compounded Totals</b>	<b>4.03%</b>	<b>9.28%</b>	<b>9.74%</b>	<b>17.7%</b>

\* plus amount added to grids to equalize salaries.

Source: Alberta Budget 2012

- Average Albertan earns 20.3% more than average Canadian:  
—Alberta Average Weekly Earnings for September 2012: \$1,085.22  
—Canadian average weekly earnings for September 2012: \$902.29

Source: Statistics Canada

## Information on Teacher Work

- Teachers provide sophisticated diagnoses of student learning needs and plan innovative and engaging learning opportunities based on those needs.
- Rich lesson development engages kids in meaningful learning activities.
- Teachers need self-directed time outside of classes to perform professional obligations, conduct research and prepare for instruction.
- 60 per cent of teachers were covered by either hours of work and/or minutes of instruction clauses in 2011/12 in the following jurisdictions:
  - Calgary Roman Catholic Separate SD No 1
  - Calgary SD No 19
  - CSFR du Centre-Nord No 2
  - Conseil Scolaire du Sud de l'Alberta
  - Edmonton Catholic Separate SD No 7
  - Edmonton SD No 7
  - Elk Island Catholic Separate RD No 41
  - Greater St. Albert Catholic RD No 29
  - Medicine Hat SD No 76
  - Northland SD No 61
  - Parkland SD No 70
  - Red Deer Catholic RD No 29
  - Rocky View SD No 4
  - St Albert PSSD No 6

- Outside of the classroom, teachers support instruction by
  - researching new resources,
  - planning for instruction,
  - preparing class materials,
  - designing student assessment activities
  - assessing student learning
  - communicating with parents
  - collaborating with colleagues
  - reflecting on their practice
  
- 87 per cent of Albertans believe it is reasonable to have province-wide guidelines for teachers' work hours.
- 907 hours of instruction represents an average of 1,430 minutes of instruction per week spread over 190 instructional days. This number is the maximum allotted in many clauses in collective agreements already in place.
- 1,200 hours of instruction represents an average of 1,800 minutes of assigned work per week spread over 200 teacher days. This number is the maximum allotted in many clauses in collective agreements already in place.

## **Inspiring Education**

*Inspiring Education* was a consultative process where over 3,800 Albertans participated in community and online conversations as well as a provincial forum to envision the educated Albertan of 2030. The [Steering Committee report](#), for which Education Minister Jeff Johnson was the co-chair, was released in April 2010 and outlines “a long-term vision for Alberta’s education system.”

The report says that “Albertans see the teacher as the single most important contributor to learner success.” It also says that “Albertans see the role of the teacher changing from that of a knowledge authority to an architect of learning one—who plans, designs and oversees learning activities.”

Alberta’s teachers have been actively working with all of the previous three ministers to help achieve the informed transformation of education outlined in the *Inspiring Education* document. An August 2012 ATA research update, [A Great School for All: Transforming Education in Alberta](#), outlines the Association’s views on the kind of educational transformation that is needed to ensure that Alberta continues to have one of the best education systems in the world.

## **If there is no provincial agreement**

Absent a provincial agreement, the ATA will continue to support meaningful improvements in education that will address the growing complexity of Alberta classrooms and communities. We will continue the long-standing process of negotiating agreements with school boards: local collective bargaining.

One thing that needs to be made clear is that the concessions the Association is willing to propose to its members as part of a provincial agreement will not be the basis for local negotiations—they were under consideration as one component of a larger provincial agreement. As local collective bargaining continues, teachers and school boards will have to reach solutions that work for them.

Local collective bargaining in accordance with the provisions of the *Labour Relations Code* was the norm in Alberta prior to 2007 and is the usual way in which the ATA and school boards arrive at collective agreements. Its primary advantage is that it allows local agreements to be tailored to meet local conditions and situations.

Through its 62 local bargaining units, the Association has been engaged in negotiations at some level with all 62 Alberta school boards throughout the tripartite talks. There have already been productive discussions and resolution of issues in many jurisdictions.

Based on past experience, the Association anticipates agreements will be successfully concluded in many jurisdictions, but cannot guarantee that the process will proceed smoothly across the province. There remains the possibility of boards locking out teachers and/or teachers striking in the event the parties reach an impasse. This will be particularly true if individual school boards refuse to address teachers' issues concerning teacher work.

Through local bargaining, teachers will seek to secure conditions of professional practice that will allow them to do their best work.