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# TEACHER GUIDE

## Teachers' Conventions: Obligations



The Alberta  
Teachers' Association

# Teachers' Conventions: Obligations

## A Professional Obligation

Teachers accept responsibility to be informed and knowledgeable about educational issues and changes. The *Teaching Profession Act*, the legislation that established the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA), states that one of the objectives of the ATA is "to improve the teaching profession . . . by organizing and supporting groups which tend to improve the knowledge and skill of teachers, by meetings, publications, research and other activities designed to maintain and improve the competence of teachers."

## Purpose of Teachers' Conventions

The annual convention is an important component of the overall professional development program for teachers. Convention planners work with organizers of school-based and local-level professional development activities as well as with ATA specialist councils to ensure that the professional development opportunities available to teachers are coordinated, comprehensive and relevant. Through convention speakers, workshops, exhibits and social activities, teachers can keep up with educational developments, identify and propose solutions for common problems, expand their educational knowledge and skills, and exchange ideas with colleagues. Conventions are intended to motivate teachers to further explore and study topics of interest, areas of need and new developments in education. The ATA endeavors to make these events, which are an integral part of teachers' continuing professional development, interesting, challenging and stimulating.

## A Legal Obligation

Alberta teachers have a professional and legal obligation to attend conventions. Section 205(1)(d) of the *Education Act* includes in its definition of "teaching day" the two days per year on which teachers attend the convention "authorized by the Alberta Teachers' Association." Teachers receive pay for their attendance at teachers' convention if they normally work on those days and/or if their employer requires them to attend for a period that exceeds their normal work obligations.

School divisions have the right to deduct pay from teachers absent from convention without legitimate reason and, in fact, have done so. A charge of unprofessional conduct under the *Teaching Profession Act* and ATA discipline bylaws may be lodged against a teacher who fails to attend the teachers' convention and who has not obtained permission under ATA bylaws to attend an alternate professional development activity. The ATA's Professional Conduct Committee has returned verdicts of guilty in several such cases. Regular school board administration of collective agreement leave provisions, such as sick leave, applies.

## Convention Attendance Requests

In exceptional circumstances, members may contact the Association to request release from their convention attendance obligations or to seek permission to attend an alternate professional development activity, an Alberta Schools Athletic Association finals event or a convention other than the one to which they are assigned. Requests will be considered only from members who meet all eligibility criteria and application deadlines.