

Government

1. Can you feel the excitement in the air? That's because **PEC elections are back!** The nomination deadline is 5 PM on 18 January 2019, and the election will run 14-18 March 2019. Find out more here:
<https://www.teachers.ab.ca/News%20Room/Campaigns/2019-PEC-Elections/Pages/index.aspx>
 - a. We will be having a Presidential race this year! So far both current President Greg Jeffrey and current VP Jason Schilling have announced their candidacy, along with Jenny Regal (incumbent) and Darrin Bauer for VP
 - b. I'll be letting my name stand as a candidate for District Representative for the Northwest. My name is Peter MacKay! Bonjour, je m'appelle Peter MacKay!
 - c. Any ATA member in the NorthWest can run for District Representative, and any teacher in the province can run for VP or President. Go for it!
2. The number of **teachers with online accounts** (allowing them to go behind the legendary "firewall") is up to **80%**! That's a big improvement from a few years ago.
3. The estimated final cost for the **building renovations is \$28.3 million dollars**. A bargain at twice the price! I expect that this may come up at ARA!
4. Regarding "**The Pledge**" for public education, some people have suggested that it ought to reference Catholic (or "separate" or "denominational") education specifically. Just so you know, ATA communications have referred to both Public and Separate schools as part of "Public Education" for decades. In fact, the first public school in this province was a Catholic school (Public School #1, in St. Albert); the separate school in that town was, for years, the non-denominational school. It's all paid for with public tax dollars!
 - a. Also, "The Pledge" is a bit of a sloganeering effort. "I take the pledge for Public education" has a brief, definitive quality. Changing that to "I take the pledge for Public and Catholic education" starts to get a bit tongue-twisty, don't you think?
 - b. If you haven't take "**The Pledge**" ... get on it, please! And please promote it on social media, with friends, at Christmas dinner ...
 - c. Here's the site: <https://www.ibelieveinpubliced.ca/>
5. Regarding politics, teachers are reminded that **political party policies are NOT the same as their platforms**. In fact, they are often quite different ...
 - a. In related news, the ATA President and some senior staff had a cordial **meeting with the UCP education critic**. The UCP also welcomed the ATA's submission to their platform development process.
6. **The Minister of Education** came to Provincial Executive Council on Friday 7 December and the visit went well: curriculum implementation co-operation and support was promised! Hands were shaken and then not washed afterward!
7. Because virtually no one watched it and because being filmed talking about the budget made the people in the video feel weird there will be **no ARA budget video this year**. Instead there will be a powerpoint to walk people through the ARA budget document.

Professional Development

1. Alberta Education's "[Alberta Research Network](#)" is making a call for proposals. This appears to be an invitation for institutions and groups to make application for research funds. Teachers involved in Master's cohorts or involved in District Level research might contemplate making an application. Here are the research priorities:
 - a. Social Emotional Learning and Wellness (e.g. Trauma Informed Practice, Well-Being of Students and Teachers)
 - b. Equity in Education (e.g. Engaging Girls in STEM, Indigenous Education)
 - c. Early Learning (e.g. Early Intervention, Engaging Families)
 - d. Interdisciplinary Research (e.g., exploring connections between Education and other disciplines)
2. The **Committee on Convention Review** has moved on to the validation phase. Expect to see their report - which includes 28 potential "directions" for Teacher's Conventions in Alberta - in the months to come. Please give honest feedback, considering not only what is in the report but what (if anything) is absent.
3. **Only about half of teachers are members of ATA Specialist Councils**, this despite every member getting one free membership. Now does that make sense? I ask you ...
4. **Postsecondary institutions around the province are developing capacity** to meet the growing need for **school leader certification and Indigenous-themed (and targeted) education**.
5. Administrators should keep their eyes peeled for PD opportunities re: the new Leadership Standards. They may be something at conventions ...
6. There will be a "**Walking Together: Education for Reconciliation Gathering**" in Grande Prairie on 24 May 2018.

Member Services

1. The minister has convened a **committee to examine "Time out, Seclusion, and Physical Restraint Guidelines."** The ATA has representation on this committee. Expect to hear more in the future.
2. The **ATA's committee on "Understanding Aggression in Alberta Schools"** has begun its work; their research will take some time, it seems.
3. The **number of professional conduct cases being reported seems to have spiked:** at this time last year 15 new cases had been reported; this year that number is 45 new cases. Yikes.
 - a. Weird not-so-fun fact: **20% of current conduct cases come from the ATA's Northwest district!** This despite the fact that we don't have anywhere close to 20% of the teachers!
4. **Occupational Health and Safety** continues to be much on people's minds. It seems that the multi-district, province-wide attempt at a variance allowing for one Work Site Health and Safety Committee per district has failed. Districts are now trying to get Local support for "approvals": basically, they want each local to sign off on a single district-wide committee, as opposed to school based committees. **The ATA is recommending that locals do not sign without seeking specific advice from both**

Member Services and Teacher Welfare, however most folks are going with a single committee.

- a. In two cases, a school district wouldn't take "no" for an answer from their ATA local and attempted to bypass the local and have the teachers sign off on an "approval" directly. This upset folks in the local, not least because the teachers were signing a single piece of paper; essentially, the teachers were helping the district to compose a "loyal employees" list. Also, making OHS decisions may be beyond the expertise of most teachers.

CONTACT BARNETT HOUSE IMMEDIATELY IF THIS OCCURS IN YOUR DISTRICT!

5. But are school based committees (per the legislation) the best option for schools?

Could an alternative structure work just as well, or even better? Short answer: choose the option that best ensures a safe workplace, but make your choice carefully and only after having consulted Member Services. Some things to look for if you employer proposes a district-wide committee:

- a. **Some district wide committee Terms of Reference limit the scope of the committee's work to "district-wide" safety issues.** This could be a problem because, when you think about it, our schools are quite diverse: different grade levels, urban/rural, some have welding/mechanical/ cooking/construction shops ... lots of differences. Some issues might be very site specific.
- b. **Some District's Terms of Reference for a single district wide committee don't allow for every school to be represented on the committee.** That's a potentially significant issue given the reasons listed in "a", above. Also, easy worker access to the committee members is an important part of the effective functioning of the committees. This comes from the OHS site: "[Workers and other parties at the work site need to be able to contact a committee member with a concern or question.](#)" Such contact is certainly easier with committee members at every school!
- c. **The District's Terms of reference for a single district wide committee are important and need to be scrutinized closely.** For instance, one such document says that a committee member will "participate with the employer in the investigation of work refusals and incident investigations." But the OHS website gives a different take, arguably more advantageous to workers: "[If the dangerous condition is not remedied immediately, the condition is inspected by the employer, the worker, and the HSC co-chair that represents the worker.](#)" Read the terms of reference carefully before signing off.
- d. Some concerns have been expressed about the expense associated with school based committees. **With regards to that, teachers should know that these committees already exist at several schools around the province and are reported to be working well:** no financial catastrophe has occurred at those sites and programs have not been impacted! Also, if the training time and cost is a concern the district might consider using inservice days for this purpose. Finally, spending a bit of money to ensure a safe work site seems sensible, does it not?
- e. **Finally, and most importantly, teachers should always seek advice from their Association before making consequential choices related to their employment.** That, as they say, is why you pay them \$120/month! I'm sure all of your colleagues, including school administration, would agree! So please call ATA Member Services at 1-800-232-7208 and ask them whether you should sign off on the district's Terms of Reference. I don't want to speak for them but I have a good idea of what they'll tell you!

Teacher Welfare

1. Keep your eye on that [Central Table Bargainer's Blog](#). Things went from "It's fine" to "It's something else" in a hurry, and now we have a mediator!
2. There are **13 (maybe even fewer) local tables still engaged in bargaining for the agreement ending in August of 2018!** Most are in or headed to mediation. And a couple may have a deal!
3. The **processing of agreements into a single unified document continues at a snail's pace!** Here's where Northwest local agreements stand: PRSD (in progress; ATA sent revisions to Peace 10 and they are going back and forth), High Prairie (ATA has received and is reviewing), GPCSD (ATA has received and is reviewing). The others? Not a word as of mid-December.

Other Stuff

1. Several people at local Presidents observed that the **wifi at Barnett House "sucks."** One tip: you need to use your web browser to join the ATA's wifi. Using your email to do this doesn't work because they ATA is worried about malicious nerds sending out phishing emails from the parking lot. So ... join via the browser and all will be well!
2. The **ATA has made efforts to improve the website search function** and make it so it actually uses search criteria in curating results! This may be the beginning of a brand new era of search engine functionality! Or not! We'll see ...
3. Peter MacKay's Northwest District Representative Calendar:
 - a. <https://calendar.google.com/calendar?cid=bWZvNWdkODdwc21wczFhMW05cFjN2I0YWNAZ3JvdXAuY2FsZW5kYXluZ29vZ2xlLnNvbQ>
4. Upcoming Dates of interest:
 - a. January 17/18 Provincial Executive Council
 - b. February 8/9 Local Presidents
 - c. February 25/26 Provincial Executive Council
 - d. March 7/8 Mighty Peace Teachers Convention
 - e. March 11 Budget workbook deadline
 - f. March 11-15 sub teacher appreciation week
 - g. March 15 Resolutions mailing to locals
 - h. March 9, 16, or April 6th - ARA resolutions "pre-meeting." ACTUAL TBD
 - i. March 23-31 my spring break!
 - j. April 4/5 Provincial Executive Council
 - k. April 12 deadline resolution submission
 - l. April 12/13 TWAC Calgary
5. Check the ATA Events Calendar for more dates:
 - a. <https://www.teachers.ab.ca/For%20Members/Events%20Calendar/Pages/default.aspx>