

Government

1. Provincial Executive Council discussed the upcoming **Annual Representative Assembly**. The agenda includes a hard stop at 9:30pm on Sunday night. In previous years Sunday evening has been extended into the early hours of Monday morning. This will not happen this year.
2. Council spent many hours discussing **the budget, which was presented to Local Presidents in February**. The budget is based on 33300 teachers, a reduction of 1500 members, representing approximately \$2 million less in revenue. Finance Committee went over every line of the budget and made reductions where they could. For example, there will only be one Beginning Teachers' Conference next year, committees that usually meet four times a year were reduced to three meetings, conference attendance by executive staff and council was reduced, there is no proposed new hiring. However, council decided that now is not the time to decimate services to members, believing that fewer teachers will actually result in more work for Member Services and Teacher Welfare (layoffs, transfers, sick teachers, stressed teachers, discipline cases will all increase.) We must remain strong in the face of uncertain times. **The proposed annual fee for a full-time teacher is \$1362. This is \$96 increase, mostly driven by reduced revenue, increased taxes and insurance costs.** This will be reviewed by locals via the "Budget Workbook", and will be debated and voted on at the Annual Representative Assembly in May.
 - a. One example of cost-cutting: **Council voted to cancel the Education Decision-Makers seminar at summer conference**. This program has seen MLAs from all parties and other influential people attend Summer Conference and learn about the ATA. Last year no UCP MLAs accepted our invitation.
 - b. Other examples are sure to be considered by locals via the budget workbook and at ARA.
3. Speaking of **summer conference**:
 - a. There will be some **meal changes** at the upcoming Summer Conference (August 10 - 14) regarding meals: evening meals for on-campus delegates will be on your own, as will lunch Friday. Grant-in-aid will be adjusted accordingly.
 - b. **Wednesday afternoon/evening** will continue to be designated as **free time**.
 - c. Some locals have expressed misgivings with some of the **awards presented at summer conference**: DEHR, Political Engagement, and Indigenous Education. Some feel that the award selection process needs to be reconsidered. **Thoughts from your Local?**
4. Please encourage teachers to continue participating in the **letter writing campaign**, and encourage parents to take part in the **parent letter writing campaign** (given to school councils).
5. The ATA is looking for some **rural & urban teachers who would be interested in being featured in their advertising campaign**. Qualifications: well-spoken, not camera shy.
6. NW ATA Presidents Michael Aldridge and Myrna McLean joined me in **meeting with MLAs Dan Williams and Todd Loewen** at Loewen's Fairview MLA office. The meeting went well, with a focus on maintaining a respectful dialogue and on advocating for the needs of schools and students in the north. Teachers are encouraged to continue meeting with MLAs regarding a growing list of Education-related concerns.
7. **Some teachers are expressing frustration with the way that the ATA is dealing with this government**. This frustration is coming from both sides of the political spectrum:
 - a. **Why aren't we doing more and vigorously protesting and opposing this government, like the UNA, AUPE and (especially) the AFL is doing?**

- i. As a non-partisan entity, *we need to be careful to protest the GOVERNMENT and not the PARTY*. As such, protests at UCP events are probably crossing the partisanship line. An MLA's office is probably okay, however.
 - ii. The tone/message of the event also needs to be considered. Info-pickets are certainly fine. So are protests ... so long as they focus on "the government" or "this government" and NOT on the UCP.
 - iii. Why, you might wonder, are we non-partisan? Because we teach everyone's children. We have to remain credible as educators to ALL voters.
 - b. Why are we being so oppositional? Why don't we try and work with the government?**
 - i. We are trying to. We have reached out to them, many times, via the use of lobbyists such as Alberta Counsel, through meetings like the one described above, by using and making contacts and through ongoing dialogue.
 - ii. Despite all of that, however, the Minister continues to be very aggressive toward teachers: she has attempted to erode trust in the profession and with the ATA by a) unfairly accusing teachers of anti-oil bias, and b) cynically highlighting a conduct case which resulted in suspension (and failing to note that suspension is almost always terminal to teacher's career, and that the ATA conducted the investigation). And that's in addition to the pension matter, to the curriculum review panel, among other examples.
 - iii. Let's keep reaching out. *You don't make peace with your friends, after all.*
 - c. One caution: when interacting with elected officials **be sure not to pay for MLA expenses** or give the MLAs gifts unless you want a legal hassle.
 - d. Contact Jonathan Teghtmeyer (jonathan.teghtmeyer@ata.ab.ca) if you have questions.
8. There are opportunities a'plenty to **serve on an ATA committee**. [Click here to see details](#).
 9. The **Women in Leadership Conference** was held on March 8 & 9. This was the first such event that the ATA has held. Why is it needed? The teaching profession in Alberta is 74% female, but females comprise just 41% of school principals, 44% of assistant/deputy superintendents, and only 11% of superintendents. Even within the Association, just 56% of Local Presidents are female, along with 35% of PEC members and 39% of ATA executive staff. The ATA has never had a female Executive Secretary. Ponder that!
 10. The Minister JUST released some scant details about their **new funding model for Education**. The change in funding model will make it a challenge to compare funding levels under this framework with the old model. Those making such comparisons will be comparing "apples to oranges," as the Minister says. Teachers, parents, and voters need to understand that THE DIFFICULTY IN COMPARING FUNDING LEVELS IS INTENTIONAL. It's clear that this government will continue to claim that there are "no cuts" even when faced with mathematical evidence of cuts. This new funding model will aid the government as they brazen this out. Note: this model will probably favour districts with shrinking enrolment a bit; the student count is done using the rear-view mirror, so if your district had MORE students last year that'll help. If there's more THIS year ... not so good.
 - a. [The funding model details so far](#).

- b. [The press conference](#) (stay for the questions):

Professional Development

1. **Council received the convention review implementation plan, which was approved in principle.** The major goals to be achieved are organized into three broad categories based on their level of risk, complexity and cost. Council authorization staff to proceed in principle, with the specific goals, by progressing through the Association's normal operational and approval channels. Goals that require the amendment of administrative guidelines will be presented to Table Officers and Council; bylaw changes will require the preparation of an electoral ballot to be debated at the Annual Representative Assembly; and cost items will be considered in future emphasis / prognosis and budgeting cycles.
2. **61.6% of teachers are now members of at least one ATA Specialist Council, an all-time high.** Given that one such membership is free to every teacher in the ATA this number probably should be higher, but it tracks with the percentage of teachers who leave HSA money unspent every year. Perhaps teachers just aren't that focused on money. It really is about the kids ...
3. The good folks in PD are engaging in a **two-year study on the new TQS and LQS**. This research will examine new dimensions in the standards (all dimensions are new for the LQS, which is a newborn still wrapped in swaddling clothes), in particular the standards related to Indigenous knowledge and the supports needed to achieve those standards. A survey is expected in March. Fun fact: the Superintendent SLQS will be achieved via a 5 day summer course!
4. An "[ATA Specialist Council Professional Development Morning](#)" will be held on Saturday 28 March 8 AM to 1:30 PM at GPRC in Grande Prairie.
5. There are dollars available for educational institutions, band councils, and others to apply for federal funds to [commemorate the legacy and history of Residential Schools](#).

Member Services

1. **Teachers are advised to be careful on social media.** Teachers are urged to avoid getting into online discussions about illegal labour action including work to rule. Teachers might also consider revising their personal information on social media: identifying yourself as a teacher is probably better than identifying yourself as a "teacher in school division x."
2. **Teachers should also not allow themselves to be silenced or intimidated on social media.** More than any time in recent history, Alberta teachers need to speak up and advocate for the profession. If you run into choppy water when doing so, please call MS for advice.

Teacher Welfare

1. **The Central Table Bargaining Survey will run from March 2nd through March 23rd.** Your TWC will alert you when the survey becomes live. [Here is the link!](#)
2. Re: Central Bargaining, **changes were made to the structure of the Teacher Employer Bargaining Association** (aka TEBA, or government + boards). Those are the folks we bargain with at the Central Bargaining table. When passed the changes will affect TEBA, NOT the ATA.
 - a. A slight change at the bargaining table: 8 government seats, 7 board seats

- b. A big change in decision making power: those 15 people, above, now have the final say; the boards do not have ratification power; and note that government sits in majority
 - c. TEBA will have the right to charge boards for grievance costs
3. **32 out of 61 bargaining units have completed local bargaining.** This list includes Lethbridge Public and Holy Spirit who have BUGMs in early February. Edmonton Catholic is the first of the large urbans to settle. Edmonton Public has voted to go to mediation. The 2018-2020 Collective Agreement template is ready for the input of local data.
- a. LOTS of locals continue to get the HSA/WSA split
 - b. One local agreement was rejected by teachers at a BUGM. What happens then?
 - i. Typically, the vote turning down an agreement is followed by a vote to authorize mediation. Then bargaining continues with the help of a mediator (note: 2 days of mediation come at no cost in those cases; the government pays).
 - ii. What if no agreement emerges even with mediation? There are three paths:
 - 1. Just keep talking until you get a deal
 - 2. A lockout vote by the employer/cooling off period/lockout
 - 3. A strike vote by the teachers/cooling off period/lockout
4. **ATRF has released its [annual report](#).** The fund did very well last year (plan assets increased from 16.6 billion to 18.1 billion in that time) and has paid off a deficit early. As a result, contribution rates will go down by 1% in September. This 1% is split between teachers and government. **This means your pension deduction will decrease by 0.5% of salary** (multiply your gross income by 0.5% to approximate the amount) ATRF is busy negotiating an Investment Management Agreement (IMA) with AIMCo (they will become a “service provider”). On a positive note, they have secured continuing employment contracts for 50 ATRF staff with AIMCo. When assets are transferred, the staff will move with them.
5. We are starting to hear about some divisions publishing **calendars for next year that have eliminated lieu days for Parent Teacher Interviews**. Teachers should be attentive to such actions and should alert their TWC and TW at Barnett House about such decisions.
- a. Teachers MAY find some protection from these decisions in **Employment Standards Hours of Work regulations** and in the “**reasonable workday**” definition.
6. One AUPE group got a 1% raise (retro to April 1) via arbitration. Everyone else ... **0%**.
7. The **Financial Wellness 101** session, held on 11 January 2020 was very well received. Teacher Welfare has picked up the idea - the session was focused 50/50 on managing debt and on how to save - and you can now book similar sessions for you local by contacting Teacher Welfare.
- a. It's best to book these through Teacher Welfare; some “financial planners” out there are looking for opportunities to persuade teachers to remove their funds from the pension plan and redirect those dollars into RRSPs. This is a bad idea, generally.
8. There will be a [pre-retirement seminar on Saturday 25 April, 9 AM to 4 PM in Grande Prairie](#) at the Holiday Inn. It's free to the GP area locals.
- a. If your local wants to book a similar event, do so quickly. Retirement consultants are going away soon. Email teacherretirementray@gmail.com if you want book!

Other Stuff: Peter MacKay's [Northwest DR Calendar](#) and the [ATA Calendar](#)

Peter MacKay contact
ATA Barnett House:

email: peter.mackay@ata.ab.ca
1-800-232-7208

Cell: 780-512-4268