

What's the buzz?**1. COVID continues to compel emergency remote teaching. This has been accompanied by many new sources of concern and anxiety:****a. Teaching related (not an exhaustive list)**

- i. Engagement is slipping for many students, especially as the weather improves and we all get tired of this online thing.
- ii. "Expectation creep" from admin, parents, possibly even students; teachers need to keep some boundaries around their teaching duties, especially when working from home
- iii. ZOOM fatigue, which is a real thing it seems
- iv. Assessment and reporting in this teaching environment
- v. Districts not replacing staff going out on long term leave and reassigning those students to another teacher, which is resulting in very high class sizes. PLEASE CONTACT MEMBER SERVICES ABOUT EACH OF THESE INCIDENTS; PRESIDENT SCHILLING WOULD APPRECIATE BEING CC'D.
- vi. Student and teacher wellness and mental health.

b. Future related (also not exhaustive)

- i. Districts are announcing budgets for next year; some look grim; High Prairie School Division is looking at a \$2.5 million dollar cut to a \$37 419 000 budget, for a 6.7% cut; this is comparable to other district's estimated cuts (Calgary Catholic 5.7%); this bears watching.
- ii. When will students return to school? What will that look like? What measures will be put in place?
- iii. What about the economy? The price of oil? What will this government do next? What about our pension? Layoffs? Class sizes?

c. Other concerns

- i. Weird decisions and demands made by district admin: teachers being told that they should not criticize the government on social media because it could be a Code of Conduct violation (it would not be, provided that the criticisms were expressed in a way that maintained the honour and dignity of the profession); teachers being called to attend in-person meetings for reasons that could be best described as "dubious"
- ii. Teachers making bad or ill-advised choices: yes, it's reasonable for your principal to ask to be added to your google classroom and yes you may be asked to account for how you spent your time when working from home (although the ask should be reasonable)

d. Be sure to call the Association (see phone number below) if you have concerns. Many issues are also addressed on the [Association's COVID-19 page](#).

- i. [The Association's Pandemic Research Survey](#) closes on May 15th. Make your voice heard on this, people!

Government

1. **Changes were made to the Electoral Processes for Provincial Executive Council (PEC) and Table Officer (ATA President and VPs) elections.** Most of the changes were made with the intention of making the process safer (excessive election period travel was a concern) and more equitable. Details will be forthcoming. Please review and let me know your thoughts.
2. **ARA will be held VIRTUALLY 13 and 14 August 2020.**
 - a. Locals can expect to receive an orientation to the budget again this year, although the best format is still being determined.
3. **Summer conference has been cancelled, although some virtual PD may be provided (this will vary by program area and sub-group).**
4. **PEC altered Local Constitutions so that during the duration of a governance emergency and for a period of 40 operational school days thereafter, local execs (by majority vote) will be able to:**
 - a. Extend terms of office, subject to approval by the ATA's table officers (Pres/VPs/Exec Secretary)
 - b. Extend local committee appointments
 - c. Fill vacancies on Exec/committees
 - d. Authorize unconventional/virtual meetings and voting procedures
 - e. Exercise AGM authority for the period of the emergency
 - f. Set a local budget, allocate funds, authorize expenditures, make changes to the local levy

That's the meat and potatoes. What you get from the ATA will be the definitive version.

5. **Similar emergency powers were granted to Specialist Councils and to Convention Associations;** again, wait to see the official word on this.
6. Please encourage teachers to [CALL THEIR MLA](#) regarding the recent cuts to education, changes to our ATRF pension, etc. (perhaps mention rural doctors)
7. Association research continues apace. Among the insights:
 - a. **Teachers are reporting further and further deterioration in student readiness to learn;** learning resilience has declined while fatigue is becoming more of a barrier
 - b. **Teachers report a high degree of loyalty to the association while giving the ATA middling marks for our representation to government**
 - i. Teachers are ready, willing, and able to engage in activism for their profession and for bargaining matters, but are less enthusiastic about the

prospect of some forms of job action. This makes sense: job action is not something one wishes for.

8. An **updated association calendar for next year should be available in June**. This will assist locals as they plan for the year to come.

Professional Development

1. The ATA's PD staff have been knocking it out of the park with their **PD webinar offerings**: <https://atapdwebinars2020.sched.com/>
2. **PD is also offering wellness resources**: https://teachers-ab.libguides.com/ATA_PD/SupportsForOnlineLearning
3. COVID-19 has prompted the government to bring **the implementation and development of new curriculum to a stop**, for now.
 - a. Fortunately no one suffered whiplash because the process was already moving at glacial speed!
 - b. The Minister has yet to make decisions based on the curriculum panel's recommendations. We wait with bated breath, but don't hold your breath because if you do you'll surely die.

Member Services

1. Local Constitutions have amended to include a clause re: **how locals are to populate their Joint Worksite Health and Safety Committees** (executives will choose whether to appoint reps or hold a vote at Local Council).
2. The Committee on Understanding Aggression in Alberta Schools has completed the research phase; expect to see a report in the fall.
 - a. One insight: **teachers only report incidents of aggression and violence about half the time, but those who do report indicate a higher level of satisfaction with the final outcome** (which makes a LOT of sense, when you think about it). **REPORT THESE INCIDENTS**, people, especially using the OHS reporting tools.

Teacher Welfare

1. **The right of substitute teachers to vote on bargaining matters has been extended to account for COVID-19**:
 - a. "during a pandemic or other occasion where schools are closed for an extended period of time and with respect to bargaining matters other than those governed by the Labour Relations Code, substitute teachers who were employed in the 60 calendar days prior to the date of closing of schools."
2. **You may have heard that AIMco lost some money (between 2 and 4 billion dollars) on "volatility" plays in the stock market.**

- a. Your Alberta Teachers Retirement Fund (ATRF) dollars were NOT affected by the AIMco volatility plays. Our funds are still under ATRF management until year's end.
 - b. To be clear, the stock market has tanked terribly because of COVID-19, and ATRF's investment yields will naturally reflect that. However, we are hoping to get a comparison of ATRF's yields vs. AIMco's for the year so far. The results may be illuminating.
- 3. Central Table Bargaining has been postponed until the fall. No dates have been set.**
- a. We expect that the ATA's initial proposal for List of All Matters will be finalized soon and presented for approval at the June PEC meeting. This will be the first item on the bargaining agenda when things resume in the fall.
 - b. Given the time lag and all that has happened, another bargaining survey will likely occur in the fall.
- 4. Unbelievably, one local agreement is still open from the 2016-18 bargaining round (Conseil scolaire Centre-Nord).**
- 5. Even more unbelievably, two grievances concerning the 2012–16 Ministerial Order have proceeded to arbitration.** The grievances are based on the divisions failing to use best efforts to reduce teacher workload as required by section 2 of the Government of Alberta Department of Education Ministerial Order (yes, this is the "C2" thing). A decision is expected by the end of June.
- a. You may wonder "why are we still pursuing this?" It's a reasonable question. For two reasons: one, it's the principle of the matter (workload was not reduced in many cases, and in some cases no serious attempt was made to tackle the issue). Secondly, it's important that we are perceived as an organization that will follow through on matters, even if it takes years and years.
- 6. Local bargaining is pretty much frozen (35 done of 62, soon to be 36), for the moment.** You can probably guess why.
- a. Eight locals haven't even begun bargaining.
 - b. ZOOM BUGMs are being piloted, and the early results have been good.
- 7. Locals and TWCs should have received an invite to participate in a class size data collection pilot project.** Please consider participating.
- a. The ATA is also pursuing a FOIP based approach, but we've learned not to rely on FOIP for timely information, and timeliness counts in when it comes to class size.

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