



## Welcome to the Christmas issue of *The Advocate*!

In this edition, you'll find the President's message, upcoming events for 2024, a lineup of some of our guest speakers, consultant spotlight, information about the 2024 Prime Minister Awards, a Christmas Poem from Karen Becker, PSBAA First Vice President, along with our regular features. Enjoy!



The next edition of *The Advocate* will be published on January 31, 2024.

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## NOMINATE AN EDUCATOR TODAY!

Consider nominating an educator for a 2024 Prime Minister's Award! You can help celebrate those who go above and beyond to create safe spaces for their students, continue to work hard to make learning fun and inspire the next generation to be bold innovators and creators.

Prime Minister's Awards recipients for Teaching Excellence, Teaching Excellence in STEM and Excellence in Early Childhood Education can receive:

- A certificate from the Prime Minister
- National recognition and promotion of their best teaching practices

If you're looking for some inspiration, check out some of the past award recipients in teaching and early childhood education.

Nomination packages for both awards must be submitted to the Prime Minister's Awards program office by January 11, 2024 at 11:59 a.m. Pacific Time.

[CLICK HERE](#)  
[for more information!](#)

# PRESIDENT'S CORNER

## Season's Greetings: PSBAA President's Reflection on 2023

As we approach the end of another remarkable year, I am filled with gratitude and pride as I reflect on 2023 as a whole. This past year has been a testament to the resilience and dedication of our members. Our collective strength and commitment to public education has allowed us to show Alberta we stand strong. Together, we have demonstrated an unwavering dedication to the well-being and education of the students we serve across the province.

The continued growth in our membership not only this year, but over the past few years has been particularly noteworthy. It is heartening to see an increasing number of passionate individuals joining PSBAA, bringing fresh perspectives, innovative ideas, and a shared commitment to excellence in public education. This steady growth in membership is a testament to the trust and confidence our boards place in PSBAA and its members. This year with the creation of the professional development modules, we can now use that as a tool and point of reference that we can all share with our divisions to help grow our goals and ambitions.

Our accomplishments in 2023 would not have been possible without the collaborative determination that I believe defines our organization. Whether it be navigating the challenges facing public schools in rural Alberta, advocating for educational resources, or fostering inclusive and diverse learning environments, each and everyone of you has proven you will go to bat for public schools and that is the reason I am so proud to be the President of PSBAA. Together, we have shown that even in the face of adversity, our collective voice can and will make a difference.

As we turn our gaze to the year ahead, I am filled with optimism and enthusiasm for what we will achieve together. The bonds we have formed that are so evident to me when we gather for our PSBC, Spring General Assembly and Fall Conference and AGM, will serve as a strong foundation for the challenges and opportunities that await us in the coming year. I am confident that our shared commitment to excellence in education will continue to guide us towards new levels of progress and impact.

I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to each and every PSBAA member for your tireless efforts and passion for public education. May this holiday season bring you peace and well-deserved rest as we prepare for another year of collaboration and success. I encourage you to take this time and spend it with family and loved ones as they are the ones we continue to advocate for.

Wishing you a joyful holiday season,

**DENNIS MACNEIL, PRESIDENT**





# UPCOMING 2024 EVENTS

## Mark Your Calendars for the 2024 February and April PSBC and 2024 Spring General Assembly

### • February 8-9, 2024

We are looking forward to welcoming you back in February 2024 to the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel West Edmonton, and after a very successful November PSBC meeting filled with great discussions, we are excited to give you a glimpse into what's to come for our February PSBC.

We are pleased to welcome political journalist Graham Thomson as our dinner speaker who has over three decades of experience covering Alberta politics. Graham will provide insight into the current political climate Albertan's are facing today. During the day we will get to hear from many passionate individuals who have education at the forefront, starting with Holli Smith and Cam McKeage from Prairie Land Public School Division. Then, Koji Nagahama, Jesse Sadlowski, and Allison Purcell from the Lethbridge School Division will focus on 'Integrating competitive esports into schools.'

PSBAA Consultants Pam Boytinck and Joni Avram will bring to the table their expertise and knowledge in the efficacy of programs and avoiding negative outcomes from anti-bullying campaigns. It is going to be a very insightful professional development meeting and we look forward to having all our speakers join us in February.

**For more information or to register please [CLICK HERE!](#)**

### • April 11-12, 2024

The April PSBC kicks off on Thursday, April 11, 2024, with registration at 8 a.m. and the Professional Learning Day to follow.

On the Thursday night we will once again have our Dinner and Lecture with guest speaker information to follow. PSBAA exists to promote and protect public school education, so we want to make sure that education issues are top of mind to help equip all trustees with the information they need to help promote and amplify our message.

**For more information or to register please [CLICK HERE!](#)**

**[CLICK HERE to check out our upcoming events on the PSBAA website!](#)**

It's not too early to start planning ahead to attend 2024 August and November PSBC and the 2024 Fall Conference and AGM.

The 2024 August PSBC will be held Wednesday, August 7 - Friday, August 9, 2024 and will be hosted by Grande Prairie, Peace River and Peace Wapiti Public School Divisions!

The 2024 November PSBC will be held Friday, November 15 - Saturday November 16.

Fall Conference and AGM 2024 will be held at the DoubleTree by Hilton West Edmonton from October 16-18, 2024.



# UPCOMING 2024 EVENT SPEAKERS



## Graham Thompson - Independent Commentator Thursday, February 8 - Dinner Guest Speaker

Graham is a major figure in Alberta media and is sought after as a conference speaker and panelist to bring his uncanny understanding of politics to a broad range of audiences.



## Holli Smith - Board Chair - Prairie Land Public School Div.

Holli has been a trustee in Prairie Land for 10 years and has been the board chair for the past 6 years. She is a small business entrepreneur in the Brooks area and continues to grow her passion for her community. Education has played a key role in her life since she was in high school, and she is committed to learning more everyday to become a strong advocate for public education in Alberta.



## Joni Avram PSBAA Consultant

Joni Avram is an experienced leader of large-scale public engagement campaigns that have spanned across political, non-profit and business sectors. Joni Avram, who is also a consultant for PSBAA, is internationally recognized for her superior achievements in her field, and has provided professional development and training to communicators, social advocates, & educators across North America.



## Pam Boytinck PSBAA Consultant

Pam is a Senior Marketing Professional with 30 years' experience developing and implementing strategic marketing plans (branding and communications.)

Her career spans corporate, entrepreneurial and consulting environments; allowing her to hone her skills and develop a foundation of best practices and key learnings relevant to companies and organizations across many sectors.

[Click here for more information on February PSBC Professional Learning](#)



## ALBERTA BUDGET 2024 CONSULTATION

Make sure your voice is heard!

The Alberta Government wants your thoughts on the 2024 Budget. By taking this short survey you can advocate for funding to be increased for capital, operations, special education and more. It takes less than 10 minutes to complete. The survey closes January 19th, 2024.

[Budget 2024 consultation | Alberta.ca](https://www.alberta.ca/budget-2024-consultation)

## PSBAA CONSULTANT

### December Spotlight: Catherine Keill

Catherine is the Chief Eternal Optimist (CEO) and Chief Strategist of **Keill & Co.**, and is based in Edmonton. A career of more than 25 years has placed her in public, private and not-for-profit settings that have required the diverse skills that she brings in strategic communications, public and government relations, public policy, stakeholder relations, and public engagement.

Catherine is the unique government relations specialist that has held leadership and senior executive positions in municipal, provincial and federal offices - on both the administration AND political side of government. Catherine's strategic thinking skills and relationship building acumen are sought after by organizations across western Canada and she is proud to serve a family of clients of various size, scope and industry.

Through her passion for serving others, she has been a member of several not-for-profit boards. She continues to be a committed member of Alberta's volunteer community, including currently serving on the Senate of the University of Alberta, among other commitments.

Catherine has a B.A. in English and Communications, an M.A. in Communications and Technology, and has received a certificate in Project Management. She has also completed the Management Essentials program through Alberta School of Business Executive Education, and most recently has completed intensive courses in digital and public engagement upskilling.

Catherine Keill / (she/her)  
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## NEW YEAR -- NEW CHANGES!

We are making a change! Starting in the new year the Advocate will be sent out once per month, at the end of each month. We will be adding new points of interest, while keeping old favourites such as the Board Chair messages, President's Corner, Upcoming Events, Grants, and the cartoon. (We would never remove the cartoon!)

PSBAA is looking forward to a fantastic new year. We are excited to share the news and information that matters the most to you, and continue to be "The Advocate" for public education across Alberta.



## Learn more about Board Governance

We are excited to share some free new resources from the Alberta government.

The Non-Profit Learning Centre is an online hub for services, materials, information, resources and self-directed learning about board governance and other specific questions and challenges.

You can learn more at:

<https://alberta.ca/NonProfitLearning>

On the website, you can choose from online courses, live webinars and other learning resources.

In the non-profit learning resources section, you can view special materials on a wide variety of topics, including social action, advocacy, board building, developing policy, and strategic planning and governance.

You can also email [communitydevelopment@gov.ab.ca](mailto:communitydevelopment@gov.ab.ca) with any specific questions.

If you want more specific guidance and support, you can reach out to one of the PSBAA consultants, who have expertise in a wide variety of areas. Learn more information in the Meet Our Consultants section on the PSBAA website, in the Member Resources area, or contact Troy Tait at [executivedirector@public-schools.ab.ca](mailto:executivedirector@public-schools.ab.ca).

## Calling Alberta Youth!

Are you a young individual with big dreams and future aspirations?

Are you looking for a place that can offer you endless opportunities to learn, grow, and succeed?

Look no further than Alberta!

Alberta is becoming a hub for attracting and retaining young talent. With industries booming, and local businesses expanding, there's a growing demand for skilled workers in our province. As a young person, you can be part of an exciting, thriving economy!

When choosing a place to study, start your career, and live we want you to consider Alberta!

Help us keep our best and brightest here— and attract even more.

Show us, via video, why you love Alberta— and why others could to!

**[CLICK HERE for more information!](#)**

## National Congress on Rural Education in Canada Notice

After 28 years, the National Congress on Rural Education in Canada is ending. The Congress has seen a steady decline in attendance and participation over the last decade that has led to this decision, along with increased overhead for hosting the event which has made it impossible for them to continue. The Department of Educational Administration, the Saskatchewan Education Leadership Unit and Director Dr. Dawn Wallin are currently in talks about the role of the Department and SELU for the future. They will maintain and update their National Congress on Rural Education on Canada's website for the near future.



**“WELL SAID!”**

“You can teach a student a lesson for a day, but if you can teach him to learn by creating curiosity, he will continue the learning process as long as he lives.”  
~ CLAY P. BEDFORD



It was the last day of school before Christmas break,  
The children were coughing and had tummy aches,  
Illness was raging all through the place,  
Cause kids were all coughing, not covering their face.  
The teachers were tired, awaiting a rest,  
They've worked oh so hard and they all did their best,  
To prep kids for concerts, to put up the tree,  
To hang children's artwork for parents to see.  
The staff room was loaded with baking and treats,  
Candy and cookies and sweet stuff to eat,  
Despite all the chaos, excitement and din,  
All open their hearts to let Christmas joy in!

Karen Becker, Chair  
Wetaskiwin Regional Public Schools



## CONTACT US

### Story idea? Feedback?

We welcome your story ideas and suggestions!  
Please email [communications@public-schools.ab.ca](mailto:communications@public-schools.ab.ca)

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