

## ***What is happening***

Alberta charter schools have come under increased attack from campaigns put forward by organizations presenting as grassroots public school advocacy groups. The intent is to erode public charter school support based on misinformation and disinformation on the nature and purpose of charter schools with the ultimate goal of abolishing charter schools.

Some examples of these efforts include:

- Promoting to caregivers, educators and politicians throughout Alberta, an American film about how public charter schools are detrimental to mainstream schools
- Presenting false and misleading anti-charter school advocacy resolutions to the Alberta School Council Association (ASCA) which was voted upon and accepted by ASCA members

Other public advocacy groups have called for Alberta's Auditor General to conduct a full review of the education, administrative, and financial benefits of public charter schools and are accompanied by other articles on websites calling for the end of charter schools that are replete with inaccurate statements, mischaracterizations of public charter schools, and other misleading information, such as:

- Public charter boards of directors are not democratically elected by their communities and not directly accountable to society
- Public charter schools are at an increased risk of mismanagement of public dollars
- Enrolment of only a small portion of Alberta students is evidence that they serve no real purpose

## ***How this could impact you***

The recent resolutions that were voted upon by ASCA, whose mandate is to provide support for all of Alberta's school councils, remove support for public Charter schools. In fact, ASCA will now begin advocating for the abolishment of charter schools and their re-absorption into the public system on the basis that charter schools are no longer a part of public education.

1. Impacts of these types of campaigns; especially in the current climate of fear, can create a public chain reaction.
2. There could be an increased political buy-in with a future change in provincial government.
3. Charter school council support from ASCA could be in jeopardy. **School councils are incredibly important in fund-raising for schools.**
4. Misinformation and disinformation are being circulated quickly with an increasing number of well-organized stakeholders supporting these erroneous claims.

## ***What you can do***

Have you ever faced these questions?

*Is it a private school?*

*How much do you have to pay?*

*Can anyone go there?*

*How did you get in?*

It's important to answer accurately to dispel myths and give anyone interested such as parents, board members, politicians or the general public, the correct information to effectively advocate for charter schools.

We can do this by:

- Discerning between charter school myths and facts
- Understanding how public charter schools are funded and how they are governed
- Understanding how students are enrolled
- Engaging in discussions to actively correct misinformation
- Becoming aware of how social media plays a part
  - Follow the **#abed** or **#ableg** hashtags and offer educated information, correct myths and fallacies promptly
- Discussing this issue at your next school council meeting and formulating a way in which you can help provide awareness
- Accessing resources like *The Association of Alberta Public Charter Schools* (TAAPCS) website at <http://taapcs.ca> to learn more about Alberta's public charter schools

We need to stop this shift in the public's perception and attitude towards public charter schools in Alberta, exacerbated by false comparisons to the US charter school system and a general lack of understanding of charter schools in Alberta.

Our choices are to either push back against this campaign of misinformation or ignore it while it makes substantial gains towards dismantling Alberta's charter school system.

Many school councils have joined forces to create advocacy committees/subcommittees that could use your experience, passion, help and support. There are sub-committees focused on social media, communications, data analysis, myth busting, research and more that can use your help.

**You may not think that you can make a difference, but by doing nothing, you guarantee that you won't make a difference. This may be a good opportunity to build a strong public charter school community during a time when it is difficult to physically do so.**