



November 2021

Hello ASCA Friend!

Although this letter is being broadly delivered to parents and principals on school councils, school division leaders, ASCA Board alumni, ASCA Honourary Life Members, ASCA Award recipients, and others on our email distribution list, it is you, personally, who I am asking for help.

As you read this, you will note I conclude with three asks, and I am hoping you can help with at least one of them! But first, a little background for you:

ASCA for years has been recognized as the education partner representing parents – through school councils. Legislated in the Education Act, school councils are advisory to the principal and the Board. ASCA gives them an additional advisory channel at the provincial level, to the Minister.

Since 2002, provincial governments – through the Ministry of Education – have provided funding to ASCA to work directly with school councils, principals, school division administration and trustees, to provide knowledge and skill development relevant to the legislated role of school councils. At one time, ASCA was receiving over \$700,000.00 per year to do this work. The 3 core business functions are: Communication, Development and Representation. Some governments even provided funding to enable the 'representation' part, as they recognized that hearing a broad spectrum of perspectives, even those not necessarily in favour of their plans, etc. You can view a short (8 minute) video on our website for additional information, if you'd like:

<https://www.albertaschoolcouncils.ca/about/about2>

That all changed in November 2020. ASCA was reduced to a grant of \$170,000.00 (in 2019 ASCA received \$650,000.00). I can tell you that ASCA immediately 'pivoted'! (That was the buzz word last year, right?) Expenses were reduced everywhere possible; one full time Contractor was released and the work of that individual has been absorbed, for the most part, by other ASCA staff. The Board moved to take funds set aside in 'reserves' (approximately \$250,000.00) and utilize them to try to maintain operations as much as possible for the remainder of the 2020-2021 fiscal year. ASCA ended the year with a deficit of \$135,000, which was quite good given the extreme cut we had...and our Members and clients didn't experience a reduction of response to their needs. Fundraising efforts last year sadly didn't go very well for ASCA, and looking forward, the "status quo" operations of the Association cannot be sustained without increased revenue.

Currently staff (2 FTE, 3 PT) are operating at maximum capacity and efficiency, maintaining the quantity and quality of forward-facing operations expected by ASCA's Members, partners, and supporters. The Association has raised its Membership Fees by 54% (from \$65 to \$100 per school council), a new business model introducing Fees for Service for any ASCA Workshop or support action/event has been implemented, and a new Partner Sponsoring Program has been developed and is being actively promoted by staff.

A new grant – for the same amount as what was received last year (\$170K) - has been applied for (June 30), with additional requested information provided on October 15, but to date I have not heard if we will, or will not, receive any funding from Alberta Education. As well, I am actively seeking the assistance of a professional Fund Development Specialist, to source out reliable and sustainable revenue streams.

I don't know if you follow education news much these days, but, well....to put it diplomatically, things are not great. Or even good. In fact, it's a bit of a mess in the eyes of most Albertans right now.

In addition to the complications and seriousness of the pandemic, which has parents, students, and staff in Alberta very concerned, there is a draft K-6 curriculum that is being proposed and piloted in a small number of schools, which thousands of experts, scholars, subject-area specialists, trustees, superintendents, parents, teachers, and students have objected to (and continue to do so) ...some very loudly. Our Minister of Education recently called together her own Minister's Parent Advisory Council and announced a \$500 grant for school councils in Alberta. These may or may not be an attempt to push ASCA out...I can't be certain, but these are definitely 'red flags' complete with warning sirens!

ASCA needs to remain vocal and relevant. ASCA needs to remain the channel for the 'voices' of over 1300 school councils – and their parent communities – in Alberta (not all school councils are ASCA Members, but the vast majority are). ASCA needs to continue to provide services, support, knowledge, and skill development to parents of kids in K-12, so that our education system reflects the values, and serves the needs, of Alberta's families today and for many years to come.

So here is where I am asking for your help in ensuring ASCA can continue doing what it does for Alberta's students.

My first ask relates to an upcoming global event/day of recognition: GivingTuesday, November 30, 2021.

<https://givingtuesday.ca/about>

"GivingTuesday is a global generosity movement, taking place each year after Black Friday. The "Opening day of the giving season," it's a time when charities, companies and individuals join together and rally for favourite causes. In the same way that retailers take part in Black Friday, the giving community comes together for GivingTuesday."

ASCA is a registered charity (#125812651 RR 0001) and can provide tax receipts! If you are in a position that will allow you to donate a few dollars to ASCA on GivingTuesday, I would be very grateful! Please use one of these ways:

- ❖ ASCA's Charity Village Crowd Funding (Tax receipt provided immediately): [click here](#)
- ❖ Through ASCA's cause with ATB Cares (Tax receipt provided by Benevity): [click here](#)
- ❖ By direct deposit EFT to ASCA (Tax receipt provided upon request): wendyk@albertaschoolcouncils.ca
- ❖ By cheque (Tax receipt provided upon request): Please send to the mailing address in the letterhead

My second ask is that you help to connect me with organizations, businesses, foundations, individuals...that may be able to help ASCA. Please share with me a list of business names, organizations, individuals who you think I should at least approach with our Partner Sponsoring Program.

<https://www.albertaschoolcouncils.ca/about/about2/sponsor-program> I will personalize a cover letter to a specific organization or business I'm referred to, ideally to show the alignment between the vision of that organization and the work of ASCA. I can 'name drop' if you're comfortable with that or leave you out of it entirely – please let me know!

My final ask is two-fold: Please share this letter widely within your own networks and ask that your connections also share it widely. And please keep ASCA in mind in the coming weeks and months the Board and Association navigate an uncertain future. Your thoughts, prayers, and positive wishes are truly needed and appreciated!

ASCA Friend, I really appreciate you taking the time to read through all this, and for any time you may devote to considering my requests. I'm not a professional salesperson, but I do have enough experience to know that I need many, many, many 'no's' to get the 'yeses' I need. If you reply with "No, I can't do that, Wendy", or you don't reply at all, I will understand entirely. But I sincerely hope that you can find at least one of my asks to say "Yes!" to.

Sincerest gratitude,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Wendy Keiver".

Wendy Keiver (she/her)

Executive Director

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Building Strong School Communities

A respected and empowered school council in every Alberta school.

We acknowledge that we are on traditional territories of the many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit in Alberta and express gratitude and respect for the land we use, pledge to end systemic racism, commit to advancing reconciliation and partnering with Indigenous peoples in our work with school councils.