

STAYING on Our ADVOCACY Toes

by Patty Marler

The home education political situation in Alberta is at a point where significant influence and change is possible. The Education Act has been introduced to the legislature and it sets the stage for the next Home Education Regulation review. AHEA will be doing its best to review the information and represent home educators in the next weeks and months and it is also time for individuals to become involved. Now is the time for us to "be the face" of home educators to our MLA's so our elected officials can become familiar and comfortable with home educating families.

Make an appointment and visit your MLA. Take your children with you to the meeting as they are the fruits of home education. It may be your child's willingness to communicate and ability to articulate that your MLA remembers. Ideas which you can share with your MLA are: 1. Your appreciation for being able to choose, deliver and evaluate your own program. You find it essential to maintain the freedom to fully administrate your home schooling. 2. Choosing the school board with whom you notify of your intent to home educate is extremely valuable. Specifically the ability to choose a non-resident board or accredited private school is of great benefit to you. 3. Deciding whether or not your children write the Provincial Achievement Tests is an important option. 4. The requirement to meet with a facilitator twice a year is good (compared to more mandatory meetings). 5. Ultimately you are asking for nothing, and wanting nothing in terms of government control, restriction and money.

In early May, 2011, Home School Legal Defence Association sent out an e-alert notifying all members of a court decision where a Quebec home educating family was not only forced to enroll their children in a public school, but also their preschool aged children were ordered to attend daycare. Here in Alberta, the idea of court orders and legislation ordering our children into public institutions seems foreign, but we need to remain diligent in our efforts to push for reduced government involvement. We have lost significant ground in Alberta since the initial home education regulation in 1989 where the only requirement for home educators was to notify a school board of a family's intent to home educate their children and then provide adequate identification for each home educated child. Since 1989, parents have seen considerably more restrictions and limits placed against them in the regulations.

AHEA will be meeting with the Minister of Education, the Honourable Dave Hancock, to discuss the tabled Education Act and work to develop rapport. We are also meeting with the Wildrose

Alliance Party to discuss the current home education policy amendment recommendations. If you are interested in helping when AHEA needs assistance in the front lines, please contact the AHEA Government Liaison at govliaison@aheaonline.com and

we will contact you when needed.

We must be diligent in advocating for minimal government influence and control on home educating families. Minimum governmental involvement directly translates to increased choice, freedom and autonomy in your home education.

Patty is a home educating wife of 23 years to Jeff and mother of 4 children. Her children have always been home educated and their eldest graduated in May 2011 with the fruits of their efforts becoming apparent.



She has an understanding of legislative acts, regulations and policies through previous employment as well as conference administrative experience. She is passionate about sharing the benefits of home education with others and advocating for the rights of home educators with policy makers. God has placed her in locations where she has had the privilege of sharing the spirit, philosophies and ideologies of home education with government leaders as well as praying with and for government leaders. Patty plans on continuing to push forward for home educators.