

Good day brothers and sisters!

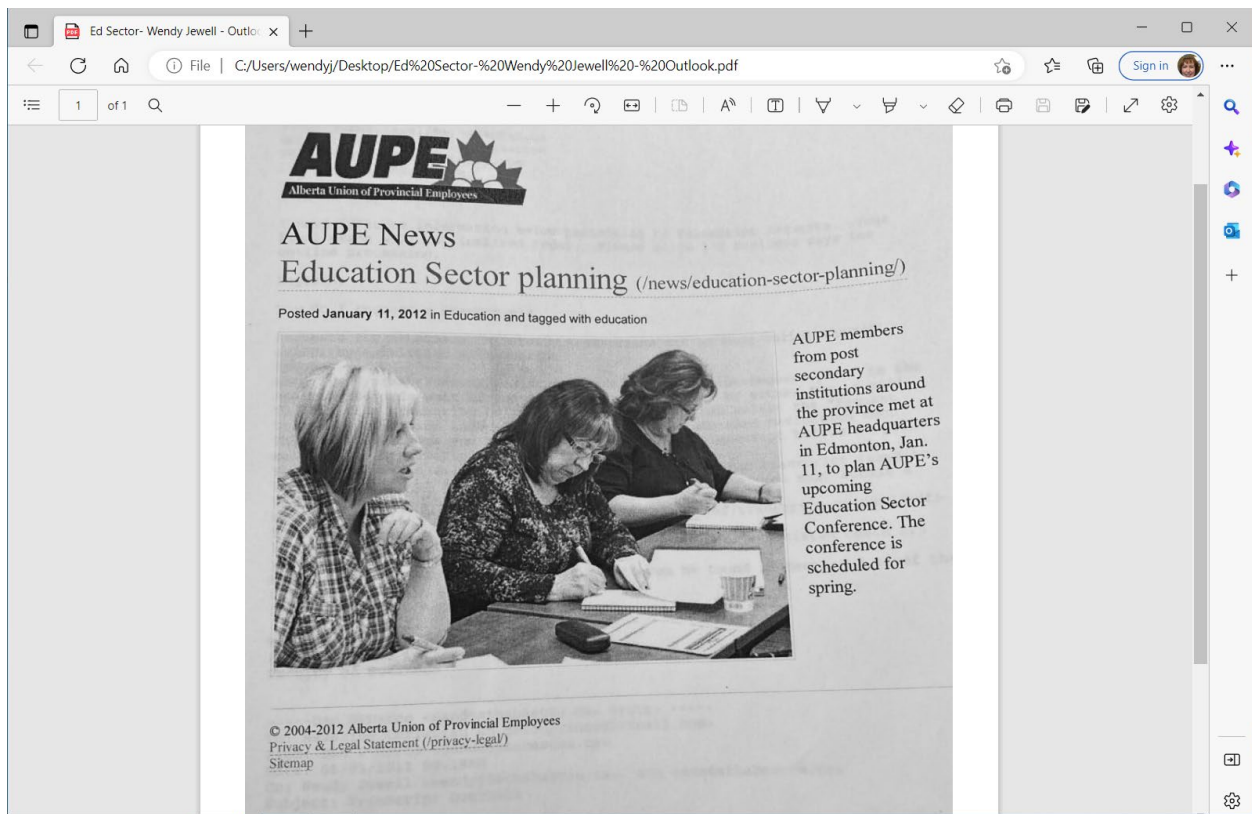
It is with mixed emotions that I bid you adieu.

I will no longer be letting my name stand for a position on our AUPE Local 69 executive. It is time for some new energized members to get involved. I am providing a little history of myself and AUPE Local 69.

I have been part of the AUPE executive since the union came to fruition in 1985. I am not unfamiliar with the duties involved, having sat on the Executive for many years. Positions that I have filled range from Secretary, Treasurer, Vice-chair, Chair and sat on numerous bargaining contract settlements. I enjoyed the learning curve that came with these positions, taking courses to enhance my knowledge to better serve our membership.

Training included: finance training, Introduction to the Union, Component Officer training, Contract Interpretation, Fighting Discipline and Discharge, Anti-privatization Information Sessions, Basic Union Steward Training and more.

I represented our Local on the organizing committee with other AUPE members from other post-secondary institutions around the province, planning the Education Sector Conference (picture included). This conference was held in the Spring of the year. In October 2011, we held the conference in Canmore. The theme was "Sustaining Education". The line of focus was "What are the challenges that students, employees, university and government were facing in education?" We appear to be facing the same challenges today. I am disappointed that this conference is no longer being held. It was a great venue to meet members and discuss common issues we face in post-Secondary institutions in Alberta.



I have seen many changes at AU over the years e.g., furlough days, buyouts, and one-day lay-offs for the university to meet their budget savings. Always at the cost of the employee.

Blast from the past showing Solidarity with our sister unions.

AUFA Info Picket in Athabasca



There were 37 people on AUFA's picket line, including 32 AUFA members (roughly 1/3 of our members in town). We were also joined by members of AUPE and CUPE.

August, 2015, I posted the following letter to the Editor in the Athabasca Advocate:

" Dear Advocate,

The Alberta Union of Provincial Employees Local 069, which represents Athabasca University's support staff, is very concerned about recent comments bringing into question the viability of the university in the town of Athabasca. AUPE, Alberta's largest union, represents rural people across the province and realize how vital public services are to rural economies.

To cut jobs from this community in this time of economic uncertainty seems irresponsible. We need the business that Athabasca University brings to this town to keep stores open and allow our community to prosper. Statistics indicate that 75 jobs lost in this community amounts to approximately \$5 million in business lost a year. We simply cannot afford to have \$5 million more a year leaving this community.

There have been gloomy predictions of Athabasca University's insolvency and the argument that AU can't find qualified people to work in Athabasca. What does this say about Athabasca University's commitment to the community? If they can't find and retain competent staff to work at AU, what does it say about the staff they already have? I think anyone working at AU in Athabasca should find that comment alarming, as well as the community as a whole.

Alarmist predictions of insolvency seem farfetched. Only seven months the Executive predicted a \$12-million deficit and then the university posted a surplus. The year before that, the AU administration predicted a deficit and posted a surplus. I urge the provincial government to conduct a thorough investigation and audit of AU's finances to determine the university's true viability.

Another problem that exacerbates this air of uncertainty is the lack of a permanent university president. AU has had an interim president for more than a year, which, whether it's intentional or not, sends a very ominous signal to students, staff and the community at large.

The community needs our political leaders and elected officials to stand up for the local economy and quality post-secondary education. I urge them to speak publicly on behalf of AU, its employees and students, and to contact our local MLA, Colin Piquette, Innovation and Advanced Education Minister Lori Sigurdson and Premier Notley to press them to ensure AU's future in this community.

It is clear Athabasca University needs more funding and permanent leadership, both of which can be easily accomplished, given the political will. It is up to people of Athabasca to ensure our leaders have that will.

Regards,

*Wendy Jewell
Chair, AUPE Local 069"*

On November 26, 2015 a petition was presented to the Minister of Advanced Education Lori Sigurdson by AUPE, AUFA and CUPE. More than 800 signatures were on the petition asking the government to keep Athabasca University permanently in the town of Athabasca.

Today, February 15, 2023, this fight continues.

2013-2014 - Layoffs

We faced many challenges at Athabasca University in 2013-2014, still fresh in my memory, is the October 15 layoff. A fundraiser was held, and it was a successful event. Gift Cards were distributed to members due to the layoff. People banded together to stop the cuts.

Thank you to AUFA, AUPE and CUPE members for marching to the Legislature in protest of the A.U.P.E. layoffs.

Although, the voluntary leave without pay was not an ideal, it was the best available option for all involved. It was about choices. It was hoped that the voluntary program would achieve the university's cost containment goal. It did not, but combined with student enrolment growth Athabasca University did meet budget requirements that year.

On July 1, 2015, we did an awesome job of showing our solidarity with our Float in the Canada Day parade in Athabasca! What a colorful group!



Elections will take place at our AGM in May 2023. It is of the upmost importance that we save our Local at Athabasca University, if not, we will lose our voice within the institution. Please give this some serious thought. Your participation is vital to the survival of our union local. Over the past years we have had long standing executive members that have moved on. We are looking for an open mind and new ideas. A different set of eyes brings new perspectives.

I trust that there will be interest in one of you to come forward to assist in leading and supporting our membership at Athabasca University. Our members need this representation to keep our Local active and strong. It is through your Local that your voices will be heard. Membership engagement is needed.

We need to work together to win good contracts. AUPE members need a strong Team at the table, bringing important issues to the table.

In doing so we promote our own solidarity and equality. We continue to meet with our sister unions and with the AUPE union organizer Scott Drake to work on engaging members. Much progress has been made in respect to members becoming engaged.

Local 69 executive has been asked to attend an in-person meeting in Athabasca with the new president Alex Clark on February 27. Great news! A full report will be provided after the meeting.

February 22, 2023, AUPE Local 69 will be attending a tri-union meeting to discuss the following agenda items:

- Board firing of AU President and impact on the university.
- Migration of courses to Brightspace
- Student fees increase.
- Bargaining updates

In Solidarity!

Wendy Jewell, Chair, AUPE Local 69

