

Answers for Allison Purcell – Trustee Candidate Lethbridge School Division

Curriculum:

Curriculum experts, educators, parents, and many of the current school boards have pointed out the flaws in the draft k-6 curriculum.

1. Do you agree with calls to scrap the draft curriculum and start over to develop a curriculum that is accurate in capturing Alberta's colonial history, diverse present, and modernized to reflect the world we live in?

I believe the current draft curriculum needs to be stopped. Curriculum development needs to be a process that has meaningful engagement for stakeholders both in the development and during the piloting of a future draft as well as once it is put into practice. There is much great work that has been done over the years by stakeholders, where engagement into curriculum development did occur, and I believe some of that work from years ago, could be a great starting place.

Funding:

Alberta continues to be a growing province, with more students entering the system. While we're told funding is tight for public education, Alberta continues to subsidize private education with millions in public dollars.

2. Do you believe the current education funding formula is sufficient for your district? If not, how will you work to convince the province to provide sustainable and adequate funding?

I do not believe the current funding formula for education is sufficient for our division. I believe we need sustainable, adequate and predictable funding. In order to get such, I will continue the work with partners and provincial organizations to advocate for sufficient funding, I will continue to build relationships that will assist to open opportunities to advocate for funding needs. Our division needs to have a provincial presence expressing the funding inadequacies and I believe with my provincial experience, knowledge and networks we will be able to see more opportunities to express and advocate what our students and staff need.

Privatization including P3s:

AUPE members know very well that privatization regularly fails to find "efficiencies" and any cost savings are often off the backs of workers who become deunionized, with lower pay and benefits. They also work on the front lines of service delivery and see the problems caused by high-turnover low wage private providers, and the bureaucratic burden caused by having to deal with a third party instead of an in-house provider.

3. Will you oppose privatization of school services and infrastructure, including Public Private Partnerships aka P3s? Will you support bringing previously privatized services in-house?

I believe school services should not be privatized. We have seen many times when services have been privatized, then the public entity is unable to maintain the same level of transparency and accountability to the people they serve.

Schools as Employers:

As our economies recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, good jobs are an important factor. Public sector workers spend in their communities, and many households impacted by private sector recessions have been able to keep the bills paid thanks to a stable public sector job.

4. Will you support your employees and your community by ensuring the school board employs staff with living wages, full-time hours where desired, job security, and collective bargaining rights?

This is something that I have advocated for, for years. I have presented to the Lethbridge School Division School Board, during public forum a few times and I have written many letters in regards to the staffing concerns of staff having living wages and full time careers. Much of our staff work multiple jobs, just to make ends meet, due to low wages and low hours (not full time positions) and we need to continue to advocate for this to change.

5. Will you oppose attempts from the provincial government to legislate against school staff including cuts to the Local Authorities Pension Plan, or restrictions on their right to strike?

I believe school staff that have worked with the understanding their Pension Plans were secure should be able to continue working with the same security that their LAPP is not in jeopardy of the will of the government.

COVID Safety:

With the negligent provincial response to now three preventable waves of COVID-19, school boards have been put in an awkward position of needing to take measure to protect their students and staff throughout the pandemic. Many are introducing measures of their own, but not all have.

6. Do you support measures such as mask mandates, and vaccine mandates for staff to limit and reduce the spread of COVID-19 in your schools?

As much as I believe in local decision making, I do believe that as the Province mandated masks in public places, they also needed to make the provincial decision for masking to also be in place in schools, where some of our most precious citizens spend much of their days. With us in the fourth wave, I do believe we need to ensure that staff and students remain safe and I believe they need to wear masks, except in their classroom cohorts, as previously done. As for vaccination mandates, we see many employers in the province moving towards mandating vaccinations for their employees (or testing/exemptions), I would explore, the legalities surrounding mandating such and put the safety of students and staff as the top priority in making a decision.