

Thank you for participating in this survey from AUPE's Committee On Political Action. The Committee is asking for all surveys to be completed by Thursday, September 30. Please send your responses or any questions of your own to AUPE via email at t.zimmerman@aupe.org. The committee intends to publish the responses (or lack thereof) during the week of October 4.

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 agree that the draft curriculum has significant shortcomings. It started with not creating a diverse panel of experts, including a significant number of teachers who are currently teaching in Alberta, as the group who developed the curriculum. I believe the draft curriculum needs, at the very least, a significant rewrite, and possibly a complete rewrite.

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?

The current funding formula is a concern for school districts that have increasing enrollment. Although the pandemic has impacted our enrollment numbers over the past year, Red Deer Public has had more students attending our schools every year. As such the current formula does not fund us sufficiently.

Public dollars should only be used to support public school districts accountable to locally school boards, and thus accountable to their communities. Public dollars should not be used to support private schools.

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 de-unionized, 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 have never supported P3 schools and the maintenance agreements that come with them. The government controls when and how schools are built, they provide the funding. Although school boards can speak against P3 builds during meetings with their MLAs or advocate at the provincial level, we do not control whether a new school build will be a P3. I do not see a way for a school board to bring a current P3 school fully under the board's control until the end of the agreement.

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?

I believe it is important to treat every staff member fairly. I agree a living wage is a priority and the Red Deer Public School District provides excellent benefits. I cannot agree that staff will have full time hours as schools do not operate enough hours per day to match full time hours for some staff who work one on one with students. Job security is important as are the collective bargaining rights. It is very important to me that we provide very fair treatment for our non-unionized staff. We treat every staff member with respect and attempt to find workable solutions whenever possible.

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?

Every staff member is valued. The Board would try to support its employees whenever possible.

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?

I support mask mandates and as an incumbent trustee have voted in favor of a mask mandate since the middle of August, which was several weeks ahead of when the province mandated masks. I am in support of vaccine mandates for school staff.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your questions.

Regards,

Cathy Peacocke
Candidate for the Red Deer Public school board
cathypeacocke@gmail.com