

Chris Johnston responses
Candidate for Grande Prairie Public School Trustee

1. I agree that the draft curriculum is deficient in many ways and should be scrapped. I don't know what form a new curriculum would take but would want educators involved at every step of the process. No party should be cut out of the discussions and development of such a foundational element of our schools.
2. More funding is needed. I would advocate for a short term return to a value based on current enrolment (instead of using a 3-year weighted average) although it would also make sense to include projections to the following school year using actuarial and demographic data to help growing districts prepare for coming students (eg. shifting the 3-year model one year into the future using predicted demographics). The education funding freeze to 2023-2024 is also short-sighted and I would advocate for it to be rolled back. However, the voice of one school board is unlikely to sway UCP policy, and we also need to be reimagining right now what our education system will be providing under the assumption going forward of less funds per student.
3. No, I won't commit to eliminating all privatization in education. Just because something has been done badly in the past doesn't mean it can't be done well in the future. I am not philosophically opposed to charter schools, although I do have serious misgivings about them. New and creative ideas for how education can be delivered may be needed to future-proof us against crises yet to come.
4. Yes I will support teachers on living wages, full-time hours, job security, and bargaining rights, with an understanding that teachers have essentially a natural monopoly on education in the province. Unions and labour relations work best when both sides have bargaining power. This is one reason I am not fundamentally opposed to the existence of alternate options like charter schools and why I support resources for homeschooling. However I do strongly support a robust public school system as the primary means of educating the population.
5. I don't think education should be immune to legislation in general. I would oppose legislation against the teachers' pension plan since it is a key part of many peoples' retirement savings plans, although I think this may need to be restructured in general. The increasing number of retired teachers collecting a pension may be outpacing what was expected when the program was first established, and also with increasing lifespans in general this program may be imposing an undue burden on the younger generation of new teachers. However in the short term I would not want to see it changed immediately, because many people are depending on that money for their retirement.
6. I do support mask mandates as a simple and low-cost health measure which is proven to reduce the spread of COVID-19. I do not support a vaccine mandate for staff for fear of losing their jobs. I am however very pro-vaccine and would encourage all teachers to get vaccinated to protect themselves. However I do ultimately feel like people should have the right to perform a personal risk assessment on this issue without the threat of losing their livelihoods. I do not think teachers should have any special exemption from a general government mandate for vaccines for government workers. For more information on my stance on COVID measures in schools, I

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