

Donna Koch responses
Candidate for Grande Prairie Public School Trustee

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 ?

Too much, too soon, and too broad ...that's my opinion of the curriculum. Making my way through this document and various summaries, I can understand the frustration I see from friends and family members who are education and support staff of schools. Pushing children to know things they are not ready for and pushing it through in all curriculum areas is too much; especially as we struggle to come out the other end of Covid. Take a breath, review it thoroughly and cooperatively with teachers, support staff and curriculum experts and find a product, timeline and implementation procedure that works for everyone. It doesn't need to be perfect, but it needs to be better and supported.

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?

Education is one of the most important ministries in the Government. If you get the relationship and the funding right everything else takes care of itself. We need to ensure that we are continuing to advocate for funding repeatedly and consistently. This can be done on a general level but can also be done effectively through targeted funding and supports such as mental health and Career and Technology which the government has often said they support. Focusing on mutually agreed upon success areas has been, from my experience, the best way to be successful in your advocacy efforts for funding.

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?

My experience in health care would suggest to me we would have to proceed with caution. Privatization can seem like the right thing to do on face value, but we need to look at the long-term cost versus benefit. A thorough analysis would need to take place and a comprehensive review of previously privatized services. This cannot be done in isolation but with partnership of the AUPE membership and leaders.

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?

Of course, I will support employees and community! Our people and our employees are our greatest resource and we need to work together to create partnerships to benefit the greater good ...our staff .our students ..our community.

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 would support school staff and advocate for them in whatever way I could!

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?

It's important to follow all the provincial guidelines. The division must rely on that expertise of the government and the Provincial Health Officer. Even as a registered nurse the information is changing rapidly, and we have to rely on the province and team of leaders who disseminate that expertise as soon as they can. We all play a role in overcoming this virus. I have always admired schools and staff and know they participate in the solution!

