

Answers from HEATHER D. SWAIN running for Public School Trustee in WARD G

1.

I assure you, I stand firmly in Trisha Estabrooks camp and the camp of 58 of 61 school boards, 90% of educators along with thousands of parents and students who oppose this draft. The Ministry sets curriculum and that is a fact. We elect them to represent us and it is clear to me this new curriculum does not reflect the needs of 21st century students nor the will of the people. A one-size-fits-all cookie-cutter ideology of education does not serve us well. It never did. This is the moment in time to get history on point; to make sure we leave behind the monocultural mistakes of the past and create accurate curriculum that empowers historical and cultural reconciliation in our multicultural society.

That being said, I firmly believe that the US and THEM camps are growing wider every day. As a trustee I want to find, build or resurrect the needed bridges between concerned public voices and the Ministry of Education. That may seem impossible to some and yet having two sides just saying that the other is wrong... who gains or learns anything from that.

Parents from across all political divides are against this current draft. I believe that shared opposition, along with the election of a Board that unanimously opposes the draft curriculum, will ensure success in shifting the government's position and change the way curriculum is written.

2.

As a first time candidate I am doing the work to get up to speed on the multiple issues that I will be responsible for once elected but I will not pretend to know everything about every issue nor will I tout out lines just to appear to be answering when I am not. I want to be a public servant not a politician so I will honestly say I need to know more about the funding formula in order to come up with valid solutions. I am clear that the current formula does not work in our favour and it is short sighted in its support of future funding needs. But your point is correct our population is growing and we have a government that seems to want to decrease public school funding not because there is a shortage of money but because they have an agenda. One tactic I would employ to convince this current government would be to provide them with statistical evidence of the COST they will have to pay if they DO NOT properly fund Public Education. Under-funding public education comes at a cost and statistical evidence cannot be ignored. You and I know good education is about creating good citizenship. Education is an investment, not an expense.

3.

Similar to my answer above I am not comfortable making a blanket statements about serious questions like this when I need much more knowledge on the topic before answering. It would be irresponsible on my part and I can freely admit I have a lot of homework that I will do to handle questions like this when elected. That being said, as a daughter of a retired elementary school teacher (My mother retired after 34 years of teaching. In fact, I come from a family of four generations of elementary teachers.), a part-time supermarket employee for fifteen years, and a professional actor, I believe in Unions. They protected equal pay for equal work for my mother who was in reality a single parent, increased my wages in the face of inflation, ensured that I had a safe workplace, and protected my employment. Not only do I believe in supporting unions, I am wary of governments looking for ways of dismantling them in Canada.

4. Again, I would need to have more knowledge and a fuller understanding of all that this question entails before answering. I will need to have answers to questions like this when I am elected and they are topics I am working hard to be up to speed on as I gather what issues are important to the constituents in WARD G. What I can tell you as I stated above I am a firm believer in the workers rights, always have been always will be. I firmly believe in collective bargaining and ensuring a living wage. I know that might not be the type of answer you were looking for at this time but again I will not makeup answers to make it appear I am fully versed in all areas of the job of trustee at this moment. I will assure you I committed to doing this job and to be fair and equitable in all my decision making.

5. I like the clarity of this question and my answer is equally clear. Yes, I will oppose attempts by the provincial government to legislate cuts to the Local Authorities Pension Plan or to legislate restrictions on the right to strike.

6. We must reduce the spread of Covid 19. Schools must be safe places to work and learn. Having said that, I believe we have to find ways to address the growing divide between the “Us” and “Them” camps, and the conflict between reason and science, and the science of economics. Teachers are highly skilled communicators. As educational leaders, we all need to be expertly informed. We then need to listen and educate. A safe school means masks, social distancing, and covid protocols based on expert knowledge. I believe vaccination is our collective way through this pandemic. I also believe a successful vaccination program is rooted in understanding, discussion, communication, and education. Vaccine mandates must be implemented in ways that do not close doors to people who think differently than myself or the majority of Albertans. For these reasons, I fully support EPSB in their excellent pandemic response process.