

Joanne Siljak Responses
Candidate for Lethbridge Public School Trustee

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 have had the opportunity to look at the draft curriculum and have some concerns. I believe there is a need to update and improve some aspects of the present curriculum, but I do not see the proposed draft as the best solution to this issue. I believe that the school division should support working towards a renewed curriculum, one that is representative of all Albertans and that will prepare our students for the future. I also have concerns with how the curriculum deals with ethnic diversity and racism and with the curriculum content at the grade levels.

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 elected trustees must continue to advocate with the elected politicians for equitable and sustainable funding as the student population in our province continues to grow.

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?

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 that the school divisions employ the best people for the jobs. I believe in collective bargaining but not at the expense of the students. As a school board trustee, I believe that we need to do what is in the best interest of today's young people.

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 there are better ways to reach an agreement than to strike. Open and honest dialogue between the parties should bring an agreement. The ATA has won the right to manage their own pension plan and the membership must be able to speak against any proposed changes to their pension plan.

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?