

## AUPE School Board Survey

Mary Martin

Trustee Candidate (acclaimed)

Wards 13 & 14, Calgary Catholic School District

### Curriculum:

Curriculum experts, educators, parents, and many of the current schoolboards 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?

There is no doubt that, after many years, a new, current, aspirational curriculum is overdue. One of the most important roles of a trustee is that of ensuring that the very best opportunities for student success are put in place. The draft curriculum, in its present form, falls short, and this is why:

- To be successful, new curriculum needs to be conceived and thoughtfully piloted. Typically, new curriculum is introduced one or two subjects at a time, and with months to prepare. There must also be in place the required resources to support our teachers, in this case, there are eight strands covering K-6. The draft curriculum was presented at the end of March, with implementation as a draft in September 2021. This creates a significant challenge for our teachers.
- Introducing a new curriculum during a pandemic, when learning is already disrupted does not set up students or staff for success.
- Various strands of the draft curriculum are content-heavy and context poor.
- Some strands (i.e., math) rely heavily on rote learning and memorization. Critical thinking skills are not developed. Other elements of the draft curriculum are age – inappropriate. Elements of the draft curriculum are Eurocentric. With Alberta being as diverse as it is, many students will not see themselves, or their context, within it. There is a lack of Indigenous perspective within the draft curriculum. The draft presents Indigenous people without reference to the rich tapestry of Indigenous peoples. It references the Indigenous historical timeline as being just a few hundred years, as opposed to thousands of years long. Aspects of Indigenous culture are referenced in the past tense, rather than present. The history and impact of the residential school experience has little profile.

Trustees have an integral role in advocating for a curriculum that is aspirational, future-thinking, inclusive, and a joy to teach and learn. Trustees need to ensure that the curriculum captures the vision for excellence in education in Alberta. This requires knowing one's community and working in partnership with stakeholders to influence the creation of curriculum. Engaging all relevant partners will provide the diversity of opinion and perspective that is needed to create a curriculum for all.

## **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.**

- 1. 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?**

As a trustee with 14 years' experience, advocacy for predictable, sustainable, and adequate funding is crucial, and has been a priority. Despite the downturn in the economy, Alberta continues to attract young families who are looking for a high-quality education for their children. As a large metro area, Calgary serves many diverse families, for whom additional supports may be needed, such as English language learning. I believe that choice in education is important. I also believe that we are incredibly well served with fully publicly funded public, separate, and Francophone schools. When these offerings are adequately funded, all students succeed.

The provincial funding formula was updated over the last year – the first major change in formula structure in almost a generation. The movement to a weighted moving three-year average for some aspects of funding is a new dynamic, and it needs to be monitored. Our district has utilized a very centralized model of administration, which allows for efficiencies and creativity in distribution of funds. This model is quite protective during lean budgets.

I will continue to advocate for predictable, sustainable, and adequate funding for Alberta's students. The relationships that have been developed with provincial partners will be critical to this advocacy.

## **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.**

- 2. Will you oppose privatization of school services and infrastructure, including Public-Private-Partnership's aka P3s? Will you support bringing previously privatized services in-house?**

I have seen firsthand the issues that transpire when P3 models of infrastructure are utilized. A number of years ago, the province announced that all school builds would be P3 initiatives. These buildings took longer to build (almost double the time), were more expensive, and much more complex to maintain. I have been on record with various ministers in sharing my concerns with the effectiveness of the P3 model. I have been a vocal advocate for in-house infrastructure construction because it is efficient, and cost-effective.

## **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.**

- 3. 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?**

In my 14 years as a trustee, I have had the good fortune to be a part of an organization that values the relationships that it has with our three public sector unions (ATA, CUPE, UNIFOR) as well as our exempt staff. Protecting the dignity of staff by offering competitive wages and supportive benefits has always been central to our relationships with our staff. We have been recognized consistently as one of Alberta's Top 70 Employers, and I am particularly proud of this. I will continue to work to ensure that our staff are well supported.

- 4. 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?**

This question speaks to the value and importance of relationships. Employees contribute in good faith to the Local Employees Pension Plan (LAPP), and this needs to be protected. Additionally, the right, should all other measures taken in good faith be exhausted, to strike should be protected. That said, it is my hope that relationships built and strengthened over time would support and protect working conditions for staff.

## **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.**

- 5. 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 believe that we have a moral responsibility to do all that we can to ensure that our staff and students are safe. I support mask mandates because they are safe and a part of a suite of strategies that support good health in a pandemic. Along with self-monitoring, distancing, handwashing, and staying home when sick, masks support the health of all. I strongly encourage vaccination as a particularly protective tool. Conversation would be required with employee groups and administration as part of any consideration to mandatory vaccinations.