

Meagan Parisian responses

Candidate for Red Deer Public School Trustee

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 are serious flaws in the draft curriculum which not only include factual inaccuracies but also what I would consider to be drastic errors in age-appropriateness of content, historical equity of information, and modernization. I would like to see the curriculum developed with a future-forward approach to give our students what they need to be successful in a world that will look vastly different than any of us grew up in or are living in today. This means developing a curriculum that engages using thought leaders, educators, and subject matter experts in its development.

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 new weighted moving average (WMA) creates some serious confusion in regards to stable funding for our school authorities. While some schools will thrive under this system, others will be found in shortfall and thus rely on the school district to make up for any missing funding. Currently, schools with increasing numbers are seeing more issues due to the averaging over three years. It will take longer for schools with declining enrollment to see that damage. Albertans have the right to equitable and appropriately funded public education under the public, Catholic, francophone and Charter systems. Moving back to our previous model where the school authority funding was based on enrolment numbers, while not a perfect model, creating stable and sustainable 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?

I am not entirely opposed to P3s in terms of infrastructure projects. I feel P3s can create partnerships within the community where the infrastructure is the focal point and will ultimately serve the broader community on a larger level. Great examples of this are GH Dawe School and the GH Dawe Community Centre, which includes the Dawe branch of the Red Deer Public Library; as well as École Barrie Wilson School, which houses the Timberlands branch of the Red Deer Public Library. These turn our schools into bigger, community hubs which I am in favour of. The focus, however, must be on the infrastructure itself and what it can provide to the community, not on the contracts and employees which are in those buildings day-in and day-out – these must stay within the in-house system as these staff know what is best for the maintenance/usability of the facility.

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?

Yes.

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?

Yes. My hope (as always) is that agreements can be made amicably without requiring strikes.

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?

Yes. I would also be in favour of school authorities presenting specific guidelines regarding consequences for not following mandates. A local high school presently isn't enforcing the 'acceptable percentage of students not wearing their masks' and that percentage is going up every day. Given that Alberta just had our first COVID-19 death under 20 years old, we all must work together to ensure our schools are safe places for students to learn and be successful.