

Nancy Close responses

Candidate for Calgary Board of Education Wards 11 & 13

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?

Our students need a modern and inclusive curriculum. The provincial draft K-6 curriculum is unacceptable and must be withdrawn in favour of one that is collaborative, developmentally appropriate and prepares students for the future.

I am very concerned about who has and who hasn't been involved in developing the draft curriculum. School boards and citizens will need to continue to advocate for change and for a new development process that we can trust and support.

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 funding for CBE public schools is not adequate. Although there has been a move towards addressing the importance of predictable and sustainable funding, enrolment pressures/increases, operation and maintenance costs and inflationary increases are not being adequately considered or invested in.

As elected school boards we need to engage our community and garner their support and advocacy for supporting funding to address the complex teaching and learning needs of all students.

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?

We need to support our frontline essential workers. I will oppose the privatization of school services and infrastructure. As parents, we know it is not just the relationships with teachers that is important, it is the relationships and support of facility operators, and other school based staff that create the culture of success at each of our publicly funded schools. I will, however, encourage the CBE to work more closely with other orders of government and community agencies to address the complex barriers that some of our students face. We need to collectively and collaboratively address mental health and addiction, homelessness, and poverty. I believe that our public schools are best housed in public buildings.

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

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. The CBE and school staff have taken responsibility and actions in support of keeping everyone safe. It is so important that we keep our schools open, but we need mask mandates and vaccination mandates in order to limit and reduce the spread and impact of COVID-19 in our schools. I also support the CBE School Board's recent request to the provincial government to reinstate contact tracing in schools, and mandatory isolation for positive cases. But, I am also deeply disappointed that they even had to write a letter. Our provincial government should be taking responsibility and engaging school boards on how best to keep everyone safe.