

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?

VANESSA MARIANI: I am not a curriculum expert, so I've discussed this with educators, academics, and parents, and have read many of the expert reports that have come out about the draft curriculum. The unanimous feedback is clear that this is not an appropriate curriculum and does not support positive learning outcomes. My position on this is to support these groups and oppose implementation and demand a re-write with adequate consultation from all stakeholders.

I have also personally done a lot of work (and continue to) to understand colonialism and to take part in Truth and Reconciliation better as a settler, and it is evident that the curriculum simplifies colonial effects on Indigenous people. This alone deserves a re-write, and requires better consultation with Indigenous community groups and organizations.

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?

VANESSA MARIANI: As an observer at public board meetings, it is evident that school funding is not adequate. Administration is constantly changing funding allocation to meet the needs of students, and it subsequently affects many projects and programs that school boards require to move forward. Public funds going to private schools is akin to corporate subsidies and tax breaks and allows them to use public funds without the accountability that public boards have. I will utilize my knowledge and background in accounting, economics, and finance to support the board and administrations call to increase funding so that education becomes as much as a priority that private sector business benefits from.

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?

VANESSA MARIANI: I am not opposed to privatization as a last resort. I believe that all public options should be explored before considering privatization of services. The Public sector has been a great example of employee-union success for far too long, and it is time for the private sector to mirror those successes. The expectation of a private contractor should be at the same level of employee protection, compensation, and benefits that the public sector offers.

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?

VANESSA MARIANI: Yes, I absolutely support this.

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?

VANESSA MARIANI: Yes, I oppose any attempts from any level of government to meddle in labour affairs.

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?

VANESSA MARIANI: I support all evidence-based public health measures put forth by experts to limit and reduce the spread of COVID-19.