

Anthony Hoffman responses

Candidate for Fort McMurray Roman Catholic School District Trustee

1) I think, like many Albertans, I have more questions with regard to the curriculum draft than I do answers, which is, in itself, a bit of my answer. I am not a curriculum expert. However, I was part of our board and administrative decision back in April to not pilot the new draft. There were too many questions, objections and concerns for us to feel comfortable. I was concerned and disappointed when the government discarded the original 2018 draft that had the input of over 30,000 Albertans and replaced it with a draft that was being hastily revised. Many teachers have raised concerns that the material is not age-appropriate, nor is the information scalable, building on previously learned material. It doesn't seem to account for teaching best practices, pedagogical differences and might seem to alienate students through rote memorization instead of exploring richer educational strategies that spark a joy of learning. So yes, I would agree with rejecting the current draft for further development.

2) The new funding model makes financial operations tight for even the most frugal and well managed districts. The province has to be shown how provincial funding decisions directly affect the quality of the learning in the classroom. Also, how the current model doesn't allow for the flexibility that is needed as districts deal with their individual needs. After a wildfire and a flood, we know firsthand how a well-managed district under the previous model could get by when the unexpected happens. Under the new model and with insurance premiums being astronomical, districts are being forced to pay higher deductibles to save money on premiums. If and when repairs need to be made, the high premiums now come out of the classroom or student opportunities because the margins are too small to even allow some local financial breathing room.

3) I think working with a 'people first' mentality builds a strong staff community and healthy district. If we are working with unions in which our staff and contractors feel heard, appreciated and supported, they are free to provide a stronger and healthy service to the employer. As a union member myself, I have often experienced the strength of a unionized workforce. I would bring this voice and appreciation to the decisions of the board.

4) Absolutely. Our staff are our greatest asset. They contribute enormously to our community and we hope to provide the best possible employment opportunities to encourage long-term, stable and fulfilling careers. This is done by closely working with the employee unions to ensure living wages, collective bargaining rights and representation.

5) A strong retirement plan like the LAPP is not only an employment incentive, but an obligation of the province to provide once contracts have been entered into. Any changes that could weaken an employees retirement strategy through no fault of their own, should absolutely be off the table. Our employees need some certainty and confidence in the future as they provide their services to the public. If the province oversteps or changes a previously relied upon agreement that affects the well-being and careful saving and planning of the employee, I would absolutely stand behind their right to strike.

6) I do not support vaccine mandates. I do not believe that the employment of an individual should be used as coercion to make a medical decision that they may disagree with for personal, medical or religious reasons. I think a board could strongly recommend them, but I believe in the autonomy of the individual to make informed, personal decisions with regards to their own body. I would support the current efforts by our district to socially distance, isolate if an individual tested positive or was symptomatic as well as offering online learning for those who wish to partake.