

Thank you for participating in this survey from AUPE's Committee On Political Action. The Committee is asking for **all surveys to be completed by Thursday, September 30**. Please send your responses or any questions of your own to AUPE via **email at t.zimmerman@aupe.org**

The committee intends to publish the responses (or lack thereof) during the week of October 4

Responses submitted by Cathie Langmead, for re-election on Fort McMurray Catholic School Board's Board of Trustees:

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?

I hesitate to use the word "scrap". A team of teachers in our division did a thorough review of the draft curriculum and found that there were some positive aspects. I wholeheartedly agree that it needs to go back to the drawing board and be revised with the recommendations provided by Alberta teachers and educational experts, as well as Indigenous people who have noted the need for greater representation. We are in desperate need of a new curriculum, so I would propose using the 2018 draft K-4, and building on it with the positive aspects of the 2021 draft. I do not think that a full-scale implementation of 5 or 7 grades (K-4 or K-6) should be done, given the learning gaps due to the pandemic. In addition, we have the local context of the 2016 wildfire and the 2020 flood that we are still recovering from that caused additional learning gaps. Staggered implementation of subjects would likely be best so that learning gaps are addressed and classes have a quicker recovery to a pre-Covid learning environment; for the sake of both students and teachers. I would defer to our education experts and administration recommendations to determine the best path forward with respect to an implementation timeline.

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?

I do not agree with the current model, whereby private schools receive 70% funding of public dollars. While I agree that some funding should be provided to ensure that the Alberta curriculum is met, I feel that 30% is sufficient. 40% could then come back to public school boards, who are required to provide services outside of educating students (ie. Transportation, covid tracing, epi pens, mental health resources, etc.)

I continue to advocate to our local MLA's by meeting with them at least annually. In addition, we advocate to the Minister of Education's office through our professional organization, Alberta School Boards' Association, for

- a) predictable, sustainable funding with school board autonomy,
- b) greater cross-ministry collaboration and funding to ensure that education dollars are spent on education.

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 oppose privatization of school services. However, we have had success with a P3 with respect to the Suncor Energy Centre for Performing Arts, which has provided one of our high schools with a theatre and dance studios, which have greatly benefited students as well as the community. Any P3 structure must have the direct involvement of the school board to ensure that the needs of the students and the community will be met.

I would support bringing previously privatized services in-house, provided that adequate funding is available. We have been able to provide greater supports for students since the wildfire with the use of grant dollars, Red Cross funding, etc. Given the lack of resources available to some school divisions (particularly in the North), school boards must have the autonomy to procure services such as mental health counselling, OT, PT, as needed when there is a lack of in-house service providers available.

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?

Absolutely! Within our local context, this is a non-issue. As a northern community, we are regularly looking for qualified staff; in particular French

Immersion teachers, teachers, substitute teachers and educational assistants. Our new-to-Fort McMurray staff provide feedback on how well they are supported in the community. Shameless plug: Fort McMurray Catholic Schools is a wonderful place to work, and Fort McMurray has world-class facilities and an incredible backyard for exploring!

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. Education is not only a right, it is a necessity. It is the backbone of our society. In order to continue to provide world-class education to our children, our school staff must be recognized for the work that they do and for their contribution to society that goes well beyond "teaching the curriculum." Public education is the LAST place that the provincial government should be looking for cuts.

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. There have been calls from many healthcare professionals (backed by data and peer-reviewed research) that masks and vaccines are safe. There is no way out of this pandemic until our population is vaccinated. While I commiserate with those who do not want to receive the vaccine, whatever their reason is, the reality is that vaccination is the only way to ensure the collective safety of people and reduce the untenable strain on our healthcare system. In addition, I support measures such as thorough environmental and air quality assessments of schools to ensure that air quality at minimum meets the updated recommendations of air quality experts (based on studies that show that Covid-19 is airborne).