

## **Dur-E-Najaf Syed responses**

### **Candidate for Fort McMurray Public School Trustee**

#### **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?

Yes, the newly drafted curriculum is littered with problematic language, questionable teaching concepts, and age inappropriate material. As well, it places a tremendous burden upon teachers during such troubled times, to teach complex material in short class blocks to younger students. The curriculum that is taught in schools should be free from the inconsistencies the new one faces, as well as having stronger input from educational staff. The language within the draft also presents a sanitized view of Europe's colonial endeavors, seeking to rewrite history by describing early colonization as "good relationships" with Indigenous peoples. In order to progress, education should strive to be truthful to the past, to allow for students to properly learn.

#### **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?

For the Division currently in the funding formula they have increased class sizes to scale back the deficit, this is not acceptable as even in their statement they disclose how student achievement will be negatively impacted. The current system is based on a 3 to 4 year average enrollment, as the division grows additional funding to support the incoming students will not be seen until 3 to 4 years later. The previous formula for highschool is based around credits earned. I will work with the government stakeholders to help lobby for appropriate recognition of the realities of the Division, encouraging more capital to be brought into the educational sector.

#### **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 would need to research more about P3s and hear the opinions of staff before I comment on this topic. However, in saying so, public schools should seek to be free from privatization, and I support keeping them free. Where realistically possible and feasible I do support bringing previously privatized services in-house.

### **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?

- Educational workers deserve livable wages, full-time hours, collective bargaining rights, and job security always. Education is the basis of any nation and it is important to adequately pay teachers to reflect that. Teachers should not be having to take on second jobs just to live, it takes away from the teachers mental wellness and will negatively impact their teaching.

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 I will oppose these attempts. Educational staff deserve the right to strike and have access to appropriate pension plans that are cut-free. Furthermore, educational staff deserve the rights to be consulted in the management of their pensions. Teachers deserve more than just bargaining rights towards their pensions, they need to be allowed in the decision rooms. There needs to be more transparency and advocacy as these are their livelihoods.

### **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 measures 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?

- I support mask mandates within school to limit the spread of COVID-19 and protect students, staff, and the community. Additionally, I encourage staff and parents to speak

to their doctors about vaccinations and any other questions they might have relating to COVID-19.