

Emily Meetsma responses

Candidate for Black Gold School Division Ward 3

- 1) Yes, I agree with calls to scrap the draft curriculum and start over. I know that many engaged, concerned, and well-informed parents and educators have found many flaws with the curriculum. I also understand that many of the same people have had concerns that those developing the curriculum were not classroom teachers, and that method of development seems backwards to me. Furthermore, trying to implement new curriculum with COVID pressures is terrible timing. I am in favour of reviewing the curriculum in use—I know that some of it is quite outdated—but the proposed curriculum doesn't work.
- 2) I know that education faces many funding shortfalls. I am also aware that, although per-student funding (aka "bums in seats" funding) has not been reduced by the current government, many other cuts have been made to the overall funding for school boards, which has a direct impact on students and staff. I believe that education is critical and that directing funding to education will help to reduce additional problems for our society later. So these cuts are short-sighted and wrong. As I am not currently a trustee, I have to say that I don't know the precise ins and outs of funding for my district. One thing I would like to look at more closely is the way that schools serve as a hub for social supports for students and families—an essential role that is often unacknowledged. Is there a way to acknowledge and assess the social supports schools provide and then work together with other government agencies providing social supports so that we more effectively fund them?
- 3) Again, I don't have the specific budget background to assess this question thoroughly enough to give an answer.
- 4) Schools are only as good as their staff. I have seen many dedicated, inspiring, and amazing teachers, support staff, and administrators. It only makes sense that the people who are the heart of our school communities are paid fairly and treated well as employees.
- 5) Again, I don't have the background to thoroughly answer these questions, but my general rule is that if a person is hired with a pension, then the workplace has made a pension commitment to the employee. I firmly believe in keeping commitments of all sorts. And, as I said before, when employees are the heart of a school, they deserve to be treated well.
- 6) I believe we all need more kindness and humility in any COVID discussion. All too often, COVID reactions lead to heartbreaking division in our society, which is not helping anyone. I do believe that COVID is a disease that is causing immense pressure on our health care system. I also know that many parents, students, and staff have legitimate concerns about safety in schools because students are a vulnerable group (simply because they are too young for vaccination). I am disappointed that the provincial government, who has easier access to pandemic health care specialists, is leaving decisions for a high-risk group to educational (not health care) boards. In the absence of provincial oversight, I support mask mandates, physical distancing, sanitizing, and similar measures that reduce transmission. Although I believe that vaccines are safe and effective, I also value individual choice. So I feel that I need to learn more and listen more before I come to more conclusive answer regarding vaccines mandates.