

Jonathan Higdon responses

Candidate for Fort McMurray Catholic Schools

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 I do agree. The proposed curriculum lacks age appropriateness and a lack of concern for those teaching the curriculum. How can I expect my daughter that is in Grade 2 to understand the history of Ancient Greece, Genghis Khan etc when she does not even have a background in Canadian or Albertan History?

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 believe there should be a lack of funding for any level of education more specifically taxpayer funded education. As a taxpayer in Alberta I would expect my dollars to be allocated to public education over private education. Also I have a very strong stance on the GOA decreasing funding to education as I believe children should not be given the short end of the stick in regards to education. We are educating our future government officials, doctors, nurses, councillors etc and I advocate for an education system with no cut corners and lack of funding. Our children are the future and worth every cent of investment.

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 believe this is a simple yes or no question. Yes I oppose the privatization of school services. Lower wages, high turnover rates and burnt out staff members are all factors that lead to poor education. I am an advocate for doing what is best for our students and that is ensuring the staff are paid adequately, have the resources they need and the support they need from our board of trustees.

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? I am of the belief that teachers and school staff are not paid enough. The amount of work, personal dollars spent and time that these individuals invest in our children often goes unnoticed and un-recognized. I believe when individuals are provided with a workplace that appreciates them, a workplace that pays adequate remuneration, and they are given the resources to be successful develop and build a workforce that will go above and beyond the call of duty due to the respect given by the employer.

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. As mentioned above I believe school staff are undervalued and underpaid so I will continually advocate for our staff.

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? As of recently I believe this has changed slightly as Kenney has most recently announced public sector workers are required to be vaccinated. Whether that includes both public and catholic school districts is yet to be seen but I believe in what keeps our students safe. Student safety also has different meanings as well especially in regards to mask mandating and vaccination mandates. Due to the high survival rate of Covid-19 in children I do not support all children above the age of 5 being vaccinated (this may soon come). I do not believe in forcing individuals to make a decision or lose their basic day to day rights. I believe in a society and country where we are free to make our own decisions and should not be bullied into leaning one way or the other. We also need to consider the mental health of our students and what impacts Covid-19 has had on that. We have an alarming rate of young children and teens ending their lives due to the constant stress of Covid measures both provincially and put forth by schools. Being an individual that has worked alongside children and youth for the past 2 years in a ministry setting and seeing

the impacts of restrictions and stress on our teens has been extremely upsetting to me. We need a balanced approach and need to respect individual decisions regardless of personal belief.