

Ron Patrick responses

Candidate for Black Gold School Division Trustee Ward 2

Curriculum: Today (September 29th), the ATA published its report from teachers that the proposed K-6 Curriculum has some serious issues. The report states: “The draft curriculum does not meet the standards of Alberta program of studies and is not suitable for piloting or implementation in Alberta classrooms.” Your question #1 is do I agree with calls to scrap the draft and start over. Not a simple yes, because the curriculum issue has developed into a political issue rather than what is best for students. As a former curriculum writer I would recommend that rather than starting all over, we tackle two subject areas per year and develop curriculum in an orderly fashion allowing time for feedback by subject specialists, teachers and stakeholder groups. Since the review was prompted by poor student achievement in math and science, we should start with those. Our current curriculum will meet student needs without any political meddling in the other disciplines until it can be brought into the revision process. This will allow us as a provincial community to gather some perspective on the many emotional current events which politicians seem to think should be solved by elementary school students.

Funding: #2 In any system where there is a scarcity there will be competition for funding. It is very unfortunate that education is modelled as an economic system. If I have a coin and give it away it belongs to the new owner. Education ought to be more collaborative, like sharing a smile. As a tax payer, I must have some say over how my education money is spent. If the public system fails to meet the needs of my child I have the right and obligation to my child to move those dollars to a place where my child will receive the quality of education I expect. Black Gold closed one of our small rural schools last June to presumably save money. That decision forced our local community to successfully open the school as a charter school and hired non union teachers and custodial staff. Not what you would have hoped for. If I am elected I will provide greater engagement with our community to prevent increased home schooling, charter and private schools. I advocate for strong public schools but they need to be relevant, supportive and collaborative so we have smiles all around.

Privatization including P3s: #3 YES, I oppose privatization of school services, infrastructure, and P3s. Schools should be part of the community. Students who know and have a relationship with the caretaking staff will respect the building more. It takes a village to raise a child. I love the smell of the freshly waxed floors when I come to school in September. The very word, “Custodian”, ought to conjure up the idea that the entire educational enterprise is about taking care of children (not business profit).

Schools as Employers: #4 AUPE School Board Employees have my full support. #5 Yes, I will oppose attempts from the provincial government to make wage and pension cuts.

COVID Safety: Let me tell you a story. A teenage babysitter found the child they were tending holding a very sharp pair of scissors. If the sitter had attempted to grapple the scissors away from the child both could have been hurt. In this story the wise sitter offered a teddy bear in exchange and the child was protected. If my gray hair has taught me anything we need to be very cautious in our sudden fear, blitzkrieg response to COVID. Much of the angst and division we see in our society could be solved if we took a breathe and asked nicely. I am not a fan of the words; “mandate, force, require, demand.” I prefer to educate, teach, invite, promote and encourage. In my experience our young people are much wiser that they are often given credit for. I also appreciate and value wise teachers who have negotiated these very rough waters over the past 18 months.

