

ELECT

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FOR SCHOOL TRUSTEE



Responses to the Central Okanagan Teachers' Association Questionnaire to School Trustee Candidates

- 1. As Boards of Education cope with underfunding of the system, some have turned to alternate sources of support. Outline your beliefs on private/public partnerships, corporate and non-profit sponsorships, and the need for school PACs to fundraise in a 21st Century Learning environment.**

Underfunding is a major issue and will likely continue into the foreseeable future. Simply repeating that the government is not providing sufficient funds will not make this situation go away. It is imperative that Boards of Education continue to advocate for adequate, sustained, and predictable government funding. It is undeniable, however, that there are immediate needs that should be addressed to limit the erosion of our education system. Boards of Education will increasingly be required to explore innovative funding opportunities to support our schools.

Below are my beliefs on the following sources of funding.

- 1. Private/public partnerships**

Private/public partnerships offer an innovative funding option in theory, but we are hard pressed to find an example of a successful project. The education system hardly seems the right place to test the model.

There may be opportunities, however, to explore using our current assets to earn additional revenues by working with private, public, and not-for-profit organizations that share the values of our school system. The leasing of surplus space within some of our schools to private preschools is an example. The preschools act as a tenant providing additional revenues to the school district that are, in turn, used to fund and enhance student priority areas.

- 2. Corporate and non-profit sponsorships**

I am aware of Policy 735 (Corporate Advertising and Sponsorship). Having said that, I believe corporate and non-profit sponsorship can support valuable opportunities and experiences for students and schools. Sponsorships are not a long-term solution to insufficient government funding, but may support activities that would otherwise not be available. However, there needs to be clear principles and practices that include, but are not limited to:

- Partners share the same fundamental values about the importance of public education and its impact as the school district does;
- Revenue generation is significant and can make a meaningful impact on education;
- Partners must not impact or influence curriculum;
- Partners must not market to children; and
- Consultation with parents and teachers is critical.

"Committed to quality education - today and tomorrow."

3. PACs and fundraising

There has been a trend of downloading costs of curricular and co-curricular educational components, such as art supplies, to parents. This raises serious issues about equity, access, and affordability, and challenges the very foundation of public education.

While fundraising by PACs may be a catalyst to involve parents in their children's education, an opportunity to build community, and raise funds to support facets of our schools, this form a funding should be considered a short-term measure and continually monitored and reviewed.

The transition to and delivery within the 21st Century Learning environment needs to be funded by the government in the long-term.

2. In the past, some School Boards have submitted needs budgets as opposed to balanced budgets, in order to highlight funding shortfalls. Identify your views on this practice.

Boards of Education should be knowledgeable of the unmet needs of the school district, as well as conscious of their fiduciary duties to the taxpayers who elect them. There is value in developing both types of budgets – but Boards of Education are legally obligated to submit a balanced budget.

The realities of the funding environment will require making choices – regardless of unmet needs. It is critically important that Trustees understand the true financial state of the school district to be able to make those decisions.

3. What do you believe to be the most pressing problems in our school district?

From my perspective, the top four pressing issues facing the school district are:

1. Underfunding by the Provincial Government

As we move to a 21st Century Learning environment, pressures on our financial resources will only increase as we plan and implement personalized learning for our students. This initiative will benefit our students if adequately funded, but the Provincial Government is not committing new monies to help our school district to cover the additional costs to deliver 21st Century Learning.

2. Contract with teachers

The absence of a contract with teachers is creating a strain for teachers and the school system in general. Ideally, a negotiated agreement is preferred – and soon. It is likely that the longer this dispute continues, the more likely it will negatively affect the school district's 22,000 students and their learning environment.

3. School district's facilities plan

Adequate facilities are required to deliver quality public education. It is important that the school district have a long-term plan to manage the space needs of students and teachers. Two critical facility challenges that require immediate

attention is in the Upper Mission where school facilities have not kept up with the area's population growth and the much needed renovation of Rutland Middle School.

4. Improving graduation, literacy, and numeracy rates

The Board of Education has entered into an Achievement Contract with the Province, and committed to improving our district's graduation, literacy, and numeracy rates. We need to continually pursue improvements in these areas and strive for a 100% graduation rate – which is currently 85%, up from 76% six years ago. We also need to continue to work to improve our literacy and numeracy rates through initiatives created to advance Achievement Contract goals.

4. Public education often involves a juggling of the competing interests of its different partner groups. Outline what you consider to be the School Board's role in such an environment.

The Board of Education comprises Trustees who are elected on the merits of their skills, perspective, experience, and ability to listen. It is these attributes, along with the information and understanding derived from a good engagement process that will help Trustees make informed decisions in the best interest of students. The complexity of public education is reflected in the diversity of opinions, ideas, and interests. It is essential that Trustees suspend their judgment and listen thoughtfully as part of a decision-making process to understand the complex dimensions of issues. This doesn't mean that decisions will reflect everything that is shared. It is the Board's responsibility to make decisions – informed decisions.

Kelowna's future depends on the next generation. The decisions taken by Trustees will influence how prepared they will be to contribute to our community when they graduate.

5. What will you do to ensure that students with special needs receive the support that they require in order to succeed in school and in life? Who will you speak to in order to find out what those needs are?

This is not an easy issue. Trustees must acknowledge the time and effort classroom teachers, resources teachers, and parents dedicate to developing and implementing Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for students with special needs. We must ensure that these parties and Student Support Services receive the support they need.

It will be critically important to continually review funding allocations and to look at ways to reallocate resources if available to needs identified in consultation with classroom teachers, resource teachers, parents, school administrators, and Student Support Services.

6. Please outline your involvement with, and commitment to public education.

I have had the privilege of a public school education. It broadened my horizons, introduced me to new ideas, and involved me in diverse communities. I had the opportunity to pursue leadership roles in extra-curricular clubs, participate in theatrical plays and choral ensembles, and travel to Japan on exchange. I appreciate the value of the educational experience inside and outside the classroom.

Following high school, I continued my education at publicly funded universities, where I was well prepared to make the most of the opportunities offered there. Collectively, these educational experiences changed my life and shaped my commitment to public service.

I have chosen to pursue a career in public post-secondary education at The University of British Columbia's Okanagan Campus. I believe deeply in the value of education and its capacity to change society.

Today, I have two young daughters, with my youngest starting kindergarten next year. My wife and I have already decided that our children will attend a public school. From my perspective, the rich and diverse educational experiences that help our children to grow up to be productive citizens are offered by the public school system.