

RE-ELECT

CHRIS GORMAN
FOR SCHOOL TRUSTEE



VOTE
NOVEMBER 15, 2014

**Responses to KelownaNow
Questionnaire to School Trustee Candidates**

1. How are you qualified to ensure our children get a quality 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. As a student in the public education system, I was fortunate to be involved in many different aspects of school life. These included taking leadership roles in various extra-curricular clubs, participating in theatrical plays and choral ensembles, and travelling to Japan twice 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 my opportunities. I completed a Bachelor's degree in Political Science and History and a Master of Business Administration degree at The University of British Columbia (UBC), a Business Administration Diploma from the British Columbia Institute of Technology and multiple courses in continuing education.

Attending school as a Chinese-Canadian, I have insights into the challenges faced by students who are trying to fit in. I understand what it is like to be bullied at school, to be different and to overcome those situations with the help and support of skilled and caring teachers.

Professionally, I have extensive experience with education governance, having served on UBC's Senate for nine years, and working in senior administrative roles in a post-secondary education setting, most recently at the Faculty of Management at UBC's Okanagan campus.

These educational experiences - inside and outside the classroom - changed my life and have shaped my commitment to public service.

I have two children, one currently enrolled in the Central Okanagan School District and the other getting ready to join her next year. As a parent, I am committed to ensuring that my children attend public school, where they will receive rich and diverse educational experiences that will contribute to their capacity to be productive citizens.

Finally, I have served a term as a School Trustee. I have actively worked with teachers, administrators, parents and students over the past three years. I have an understanding of the fiduciary, legal and political responsibilities associated with the role of School Trustee. Through my diverse experiences, I bring a balanced and informed perspective to the Board of Education.

"Committed to quality public education - today and tomorrow."

2. Everyone is looking at school trustees following the provincial teachers' strike, what would you do to prevent another teachers' strike in the future?

The capacity to prevent a future teachers' strike is outside the jurisdiction of School Trustees.

The role of School Trustees is set out in legislation to provide local governance, which includes managing resources effectively in light of community needs and interests, developing policies to achieve strategic goals and developing an understanding and advocating for public education.

Boards of Education can, however, work with teachers, the Central Okanagan Teachers' Association leadership and the School District administration to create and maintain open channels of communication, share information to the greatest degree possible – recognizing that there may be times where this is not appropriate or possible – and contribute collaboratively to problem solving.

3. How will you create more awareness about your role in the community?

An important role for School Trustees is to articulate community needs, interests and ambitions regarding public education with the provincial government and other school districts across the province.

As I have done over the past three years, I will continue to participate in school and community events, meet with and engage Parent Advisory Councils and communicate extensively with the local community directly through social media and editorials in local newspapers about important issues related to public education and those facing the Board of Education.

I will continue to participate in community consultation processes to hear directly from citizens and encourage greater engagement with our community about issues related to public education.

4. What needs to be improved with the relationship between teachers and the Board of Education?

The Central Okanagan Board of Education and the Central Okanagan Teachers' Association (COTA) have had a reputation for having an effective and productive working relationship. We have worked together to address some tough issues, as well as working hard to maintain an effective professional relationship in the face of complex and controversial issues where we may not always agree.

It is unfortunate that the issues addressed in the recent labour dispute have adversely coloured the conversation and relationship with some of our teachers. I am saddened that our collective appreciation of the local achievements we made together have seemingly been lost for the moment.

In our School District, there are formal and informal mechanisms to engage teachers and School Trustees, and I believe that they have worked relatively well. COTA representatives are active members on the School District's Standing Committees and are able to contribute their experience and counsel to policy development and deliberations at any time when issues are being debated at Board of Education meetings. This model of teacher engagement is unique to our School District.

School Trustees are also assigned liaison schools to interact with teachers, students and administrators. As I have done, it is important that School Trustees embrace these opportunities and actively engage with these

schools to better understand the realities facing teachers in the classroom, to share the excitement of students and the opportunities for innovation, to strengthen relationships and understanding about respective roles and to engage those affected by decisions to create shared understanding.

5. How will you keep the school curriculum and programs up to date with our rapidly changing times?

The Ministry of Education, in consultation with School Trustees, parents, teachers and administrators from across the province, is responsible for curriculum development provincially.

There are, however, local opportunities for the Board of Education to acknowledge the innovative and creative work undertaken in our classrooms. This is done by regularly reviewing existing and approving applications for specialty academies and Board authorized courses that are important in our community and to advocate for support and funding for initiatives incubated in our classrooms.

In my opinion, the Board of Education needs to remain curious, open and supportive to educational and technological change that embraces the spirit of 21st century learning.

6. How will you improve special needs education with the current funding that you have available?

Improving special needs education is not an easy issue. School Trustees must acknowledge the time and effort classroom teachers, resources teachers, and parents dedicate to developing and implementing Individual Education Plan (IEPs) for our students with special needs. The Board needs to understand these issues and seek advice from classroom teachers, resources teachers, parents, school principals and vice-principals, health care providers, and community support organizations and ensure that funding remains earmarked to support these students in our system.

7. What would be your number one priority for the next four years as a school trustee for School District 23?

In my opinion, there are three important priorities for School Trustees in our School District.

1. Sustained and predictable provincial government funding

As the school system moves toward a 21st century learning environment and as we continually work to achieve greater student success, there will be even more pressure on our limited financial resources that will be required to fund increased infrastructure and delivery costs.

Our students will benefit the most from an education system that is adequately funded. The provincial government must commit the resources to support school districts as they are challenged with meeting these opportunities.

It is essential that the Central Okanagan Board of Education continue to identify and articulate the needs of our School District and engage with government, teachers, students, parents and administrators to continue to advocate for a fully-funded education system in BC.

2. Rebuild relationship with COTA and teachers

It is not uncommon to have tensions that outlast labour disputes. We need to find a way to restore relationships across the education system to strengthen collaborative processes and deliberation to support student learning.

3. Create inspiring places to learn

As a growing School District, there are some significant facility challenges that we need to address. Through our long-term facility plan, approved in 2012, the School District is committed to transitioning to a consistent grade configuration (K-5, 6-8, 9-12) throughout the District, which has implications for our facilities.

The School District needs to implement its long-term facilities plan to meet the facilities challenge in Kelowna, namely the rebuilding of Rutland Middle School, building a new middle school in the Mission, and replacing Glenmore Elementary.

I am committed to continue my advocacy with our local MLAs to seek approval and funding to create new centres of learning for our students. It is my hope that some, if not all, of these priority projects will be approved in the next four years.