

Trustee candidate answers from Linda Karn

- 1. It is acknowledged that poverty has a serious impact on student learning outcomes. As a Trustee, please list some of the ways in which you would advocate for the Division to support students in need on this issue?**

If a child's basic needs are not met, that is food, clothing and shelter, then they will struggle to learn. Academic learning for all students should be a budgetary priority. During my door-to-door campaigning, it had been suggested to me that a food program be implemented in primary schools because parents don't always have time to send their kids off for the day with full stomachs. This would be costly, but it would be worthwhile to see how a food program could be fit into the budget. In some places, meals for needy children are brought into the schools rather than having a full kitchen/meal service. Exploration of community resources such as food banks could be done. I have lived in a city where volunteers made sandwiches daily and brought them in to schools for needy children. Clothing cost money as well, but perhaps teachers and families could donate used clothing to a depot (perhaps the division office) to be redistributed to those in need. If personal hygiene is an issue, the school gyms with change rooms with showers could be opened up before school starts for those in need. This is definitely an area to lobby government for additional funding. Ideas suggested should be confidential services to maintain the dignity of those in need.

- 2. In previous years, the Division has experienced a shortage of Substitute Teachers and as a result, positions have gone unfilled during a teacher absence. Which ideas do you have to address this problem?**

I would suggest that we research the reason(s) behind the shortage of substitute teachers. Why is this happening at times when universities are graduating high numbers of qualified teachers? The cause of the shortage should be addressed. Can working conditions be improved? Is their pay adequate? Are they receiving the classroom support that they need? Has the stress of the last 2.5 years taken its toll on them? Overall, let's support and encourage the teachers we currently have so we don't need as many substitutes. I'm not sure exactly what you mean by positions going unfilled during a teacher absence, but I would certainly hope that somebody is in the classroom looking after the children. People with less credentials could be hired on a temporary basis to fill in the gaps rather than have unsupervised children. What about working with the universities to find a way to bring in fourth and fifth-year students when needed?

- 3. What are some practical ways in which you as a Trustee will foster and build relationships between the Division and the Teaching Staff?**

Open and clear paths of communication between the division and all teaching staff should be paramount. I would encourage a timely response to all inquiries and comments ensuring that any concerns are directed to the best resources for resolution. I would encourage the appropriate division personnel to attend staff meetings at schools to introduce a face behind the name making themselves more approachable. I would do my best to create a positive work environment for all.

- 4. The Manitoba government has released its Education review which raised issues around Division amalgamation, public education funding and improving learning outcomes. What are your concerns with the Education review? What is your hope?**

School division amalgamation has already successfully occurred in many parts of the country. It was lovely to receive a tax rebate for the amount of my school taxes, but in reality, that money has to be made up from somewhere so will my provincial taxes go up? Will the province borrow money to make up the difference? That's not wise especially with rising interest rates. My hope with the education review is that increased academic outcomes for all students will be achieved within the current budget, the education infrastructure will be improved, and many current issues will be addressed creating a more positive environment for all stakeholders.

5. **First Nations students are amongst the most vulnerable learners in the Division. What steps will you take as a Trustee to strengthen supports for First Nation Students? How will you advance and implement the Truth and Reconciliation Committee's Calls to Action 62 and 63?**

We have over 1,200 First Nations students in our division which is about 8%. That is a significant number. There needs to be adequate support workers to work with any struggling students.

The TRC's calls to action 62 and 63 are specific to educators and state, "We call upon the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada to maintain an annual commitment to aboriginal education issues, including developing and implementing K- 12 curriculum and learning resources on aboriginal peoples in Canadian history, and the history and legacy of residential schools." That doesn't sound like a board responsibility to advance and implement, but rather up to those who write the curriculum. The board could, however, set up a curriculum review committee to make sure the curriculum addresses those items (accountability).

6. **Some school divisions have chosen to deal with inadequate funding levels from government by increasing class sizes, cutting access to clinicians and intervention specialists, etc. These decisions impact student learning. How will you ensure services are preserved? What will you do as a Trustee to ensure education funding levels are stable, predictable, and adequate?**

Funding issues have always been and always will be a major issue for school boards to tackle. In the 2022 spring report to the community, it states that there are over 15,000 students in our division and nearly 3,000 total staff which equates to one staff person for every five students. Increasing class sizes is not an acceptable solution so let's look at the administrative and support positions to see if any shifting can be done. I would scrutinize expenses to see what could be reduced. Trustees need to lobby the government in regards to funding to ensure adequate levels are maintained. Any ideas to ensure services are preserved are going to cost money that in this case the school division doesn't have.

Support personnel are increasingly important to provide all the needs of a system. However, not all staff are educators. Facility, secretarial, basic administration such as finance, consultants, etc., are all part of these numbers. There is a need to work closely with administration to identify basic services. There tends to be a knee jerk reaction to cut programs such as music, which, in my opinion is wrong.

7. **Recent shifts in social attitudes have led to conversations about systemic biases and racism. As a Trustee, how would you help ensure that the Division explores potential systemic biases within the Division? In your view, how should plans for examining and rectifying such matters be developed?**

We have a very diverse school division. It is a pleasure for me to live in an area where I have met wonderful people who have moved to Canada from all around the world! Let's continue to learn about these cultures in our Social Studies programs in all schools. If we give students a better understanding of the background of their peers, we give them lifelong tools to facilitate getting along more effectively. Partnering with parents to develop good character in all young people will go a long way towards reducing biases and racism. As the Good Book says, we need to teach children to love their neighbour. Neighbour refers not just to the person who lives next to you, but the people who you are around at any given time. We need to show love, peace, patience, kindness, goodness and respect to all others at all times. We need to have unified classrooms and schools where everyone is working together for the common good. If we go exploring and identifying potential systemic biases within the division, we will keep creating divisiveness. Above all, let us love one another deeply. Administration will need to develop policies and procedures to address these "conversations ". It should be hoped that there will be an awareness encouraged for all staff and students.

8. How will you ensure that the Division studies closely the idea of full-day kindergarten and other programs related to early childhood education to ensure a successful start for early learners?

To ensure that the division studies these ideas closely, I would expect to receive detailed reports monitoring any trial programs and results from other school divisions who may have already implemented such programming. I think that parental involvement is key here, too, and would expect to see several reports/opinions directly from affected parents. Parents are in the best position to assess the fatigue level of their child at the end of a full day of kindergarten. Tired children don't learn well and many children at that age still have afternoon naps. Although there are many advantages to full day kindergarten – less bussing/transportation, easier for parents who work all day, -- we really need to prioritize the child's learning ability as a key factor in making the decision over saving money. Parents should have the option of selecting full day or half day pre-K and kindergarten programs.