

# Marilyn Bergstra – Ward 76 – Edmonton Catholic School Board

## Education Priorities

### 1. What specific steps would you advocate to improve the quality of education?

In order to achieve a quality education system that is effective and responsive, we need to take a holistic approach in meeting the needs of our students. This means that our schools are modern, clean, and safe and can meet growth demands. It also means that staffs have opportunity for professional development, team building and access to technology, resources, and human supports for their students. It requires that our student's physical and mental health is front and center with opportunities for physical activities, access to nutritious food with attention paid to the emotional well being of each student. Also crucial, is communication between families, schools and Boards. Further, it is essential that Trustee's develop policy that will support these ideals. Through the co-operation of the Superintendent, we must ensure that the vision and mission of the district is implemented. Continued lobbying to the Provincial government for sustainable, reliable and adequate funding is essential to allow Boards opportunity to create long term visions for their district and to meet the varied needs of students to achieve their full potential. With continued decreasing government revenues, it is absolutely imperative that your Trustee know the needs of the district and that they are able to effectively advocate and articulate those needs to government. Finally, Trustee's must oversee the budget to ensure that dollars are used effectively. This means that every dollar is utilized in a way that positively impacts the classroom. In moving forward, I will continue to seek partnerships in the area of technology, staff faith formation, professional development and seek infrastructure efficiencies to streamline costs without impacting the quality of instruction in the classroom. If you view my webpage you will see the many motions that I have made that support what I have articulated. I will continue to seek ways to support and put into action, policy that will ensure we continue to provide excellence to the students of Edmonton Catholic Schools.

### 2. What are the main directions we need to take to develop the full potential of all students?

Meeting the needs of each student demands first and foremost that teachers have access to excellent resources, human supports and training. It means that the district works to build capacity in those areas identified as a priority. One example of this, which happens to be an area I am passionate about, is building teacher capacity with respect to mental health. Having even a basic understanding of the signs and symptoms of the varied mental health issues means more students will gain access to needed supports. Further, identification and recognition of mental health means strategies will be improved not only at the school level but also within the classroom. Additionally, the negative stigmas associated with mental health will decrease creating further, even more supportive environments. Understanding and meeting the emotional and spiritual needs of students is arguably the greatest gift we can impart upon our students. If we can contribute to healthy, supportive and secure environments, we set the stage for student success. There is ample research that emphasizes the role schools play in contributing to the development of attributes and attitudes of the students themselves that sets the stage for their success. Schools that provide meaningful student engagement, security and caring and responsive environments help develop and instill attitudes of self worth, self esteem, compassion and respect within their students. In turn, an intrinsic belief in one self is further developed and nurtured, allowing students to realize that the only barrier to

personal growth is the limitation that they may place on one self.

**3. Please indicate if you strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree or have no opinion on the following statements**

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>No opinion</b>
Schools currently have enough specialized staff and resources to develop the full potential of all students.	<b>X</b>				
Increased class sizes will hurt the high school completion rate.				<b>X</b>	
The board should provide support for community schools rather than expanding alternative programs.			<b>X</b>		
The school board should make sure that students with special needs should be provided additional supports.				<b>X</b>	
School boards should work with the provincial government to assure access to early childhood education and quality before and after school care programs.				<b>X</b>	
School boards should advocate for the Alberta government to fully fund junior kindergarten and full-day kindergarten as recommended by the Alberta Commission on Learning.				<b>X</b>	
School boards should advocate for the Learning Commission recommendation on class sizes at all grade levels.				<b>X</b>	
School boards should advocate for renewed emphasis on the arts, trades and language learning in their schools.				<b>X</b>	
School boards should advocate for appropriate programs and supports for ESL students.				<b>X</b>	

*Please comment on any of the above statements:* I do not dispute any of the recommendations found in the Learning Commission report and feel that those recommendations expressed in this survey are critical to the overall success of our students. With respect to placing a renewed emphasis on the arts, trades and language we are preparing students for work in the 21st Century. The arts help to develop the side of the brain responsible for innovative and creating thinking, key to the jobs of tomorrow. Outcomes and learning is markedly enhanced through second language acquisition and encouraging students into trades means that our students gain education beyond grade 12 which greatly increases future opportunities and financial health for those individuals while meeting job

market demands. Our ESL students, with proper supports, will enter and contribute to a healthy society. If we fail this group we fail our society and effectively contribute to increased economic instability and compromise safe and healthy communities.

## The Role of the Trustee

### 1. What are the most important changes that need to be made regarding the role of school boards in Alberta?

Boards need to retain the right to bargain locally. We must also continue to seek new ways to enhance community engagement. This requires a process that is informative, meaningful, authentic and responsive.

### 2. How can the school board and you as trustee most effectively influence the financial and policy decisions made by the provincial ministry of education?

First and foremost, Boards have a responsibility to make prudent and wise financial decisions on behalf of their stakeholders. Boards must be lean and targeted in their spending. Priorities that enhance classroom outcomes must be identified and supported. In tough economic times it is imperative that decisions are made such that, the impact on the classroom is not felt. This means we streamline costs. One alternative is to look to partnerships in the area of technology, staff formation and professional development and that we seek to create infrastructure efficiencies. One example of my work in this area was my joint transportation initiative with Edmonton Public and my current work to bring free professional development to the district. We must lobby in effective and meaningful ways. This means that we understand our needs and clearly articulate those needs. It also requires that we are aware of current trends and research and that we can site research based evidence to support our requests. It also means that we hold elected officials accountable to implement recommendations that come from reports produced by their own Ministries such as, “The Children’s Charter” and “The Social Policy Framework”. All this requires that the Trustee has worked to earn the respect of those to which they are lobbying and that they hold themselves accountable.

### 3. Please indicate if you strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree or have no opinion on the following statements

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>No opinion</b>
A trustee must be a team player and always defend the decisions of the board, even if the trustee disagrees with those decisions.			<b>X</b>		
All business of the board should be dealt with in open public sessions except when the board is required to protect the privacy of employees or students.				<b>X</b>	
Trustees should actively consult with constituents and school councils on important				<b>X</b>	

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policy matters.

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At times, school boards need to take more active public stands on education issues, even if it means being critical of the provincial government.

X

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The provincial government has seriously undermined the power and authority of trustees and school boards.

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X

*Please comment on any of the above statements:*

## Education Funding

**1. In light of the current funding situation, what strategies should the board use to meet the needs of students and the community?**

Boards must be lean and targeted in their spending. Priorities that enhance classroom outcomes must be identified and supported first and foremost. We need to continue in our efforts to look to partnerships in the area of technology, staff faith formation and professional development and that we seek to create infrastructure efficiencies. One example of my work in this area was my joint transportation initiative with Edmonton Public and my current work to bring free professional development to the district.

**2. What changes respecting the funding of education would you advocate for?**

Early education, full day kindergarten, English Language Learner and Special Needs Students require supports that need to be fully funded over the necessary period of time.

**3. Please indicate if you strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree or have no opinion on the following statements**

	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>No opinion</b>
Education is adequately funded. School boards can live within their means by "cutting fat".	X				
If a school board cannot balance its budget without harmful cuts to education programs, it should be prepared to run a deficit.		X			
Provincial funding for building and maintaining schools is adequate.	X				
Provincial funding should be sufficient to cover increases to teacher and staff contracts.				X	

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*Please comment on any of the above statements:* With respect to running deficits, this move would

require extensive community consultation. If we as boards were to consider breaching our obligations as sited in the School Act, I would want to have buy in from our communities.

## Privatization and Commercialization

### 1. Should the provincial government continue to use Public Private Partnerships (P3s) for building new schools, what guidelines would you propose be placed on P3 contracts?

I am not opposed to P3s or examining new ways to get schools built. Having said this, designs must support 21st century learning. Technology is here to stay and we need spaces that can support technology in the delivery of curriculum. We also require space that supports the implementation of wrap around services on or near the site. This is crucial in meeting the needs of the students as well as those of our modern day families. Further, these schools must be made available for community use in their off hours.

### 2. What limitations, if any, should the school board place on the involvement of private firms in schools?

Only that they preserve and uphold the rights of Catholics in the process and that they dont impose any conditions that would negatively affect the delivery of services or the quality of instruction as a result.

### 3. Please indicate if you strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree or have no opinion on the following statements

	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>No opinion</b>
Private sector businesses can operate schools more cheaply and efficiently and should be allowed to do so.		<b>X</b>			
The financing, construction and maintenance of a school should be undertaken as a public private partnership.		<b>X</b>			
Parents should be expected to contribute towards the cost of their children's education by paying school fees and fundraising.	<b>X</b>				
School boards should ban commercial advertising in schools.				<b>X</b>	
Students should be provided with all necessary books and learning materials at no cost.				<b>X</b>	
The public interest is best served by schools that are publicly owned and operated.				<b>X</b>	
To address funding shortfalls, schools should be allowed to have corporate sponsors, including naming rights.			<b>X</b>		

## School Infrastructure

### 1. What reasons, if any, might you vote for the closure of a school?

When operational costs sore and student numbers drop to the point where it becomes to cost prohibitive to provide a rich and varied curriculum to students.

### 2. Please indicate if you strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree or have no opinion on the following statements

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	No opinion
Additional government funding should be provided to address the infrastructure deficit.				X	
Community schools with small enrolments should be closed so that larger schools can offer more programs.	X				
The school board should work with the province to provide wrap around services in schools.				X	
Some schools should be closed so that the province will build new schools in new neighbourhoods.			X		
Schools are a part of the community and should be open to other community activities.				X	
Boards should advocate for changing the province's school utilization formula to account for space used in after school care and other community uses.				X	

*Please comment on any of the above statements:* With respect to the statement above that reads, "Community schools with small enrolments should be closed so that larger schools can offer more programs". I do not feel the decision to close a small school should have any connection to funding more programs at a larger school. It is simply a matter of evaluating the quality and cost of operation in relation to average operational costs and educational opportunities.