

Tom Solyom – Ward 76 – Edmonton Catholic School Board

Education Priorities

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

Advocate for smaller class sizes, and increased funding both for programming and infrastructure.

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

All students have innate abilities and talents and in order to let them fully explore who they are and what their strengths are we need to give them the opportunity to experience a wide range of programming. We have to educate the whole child and ensure they reach their potential.

3. 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
Schools currently have enough specialized staff and resources to develop the full potential of all students.		X			
Increased class sizes will hurt the high school completion rate.				X	
The board should provide support for community schools rather than expanding alternative programs.			X		
The school board should make sure that students with special needs should be provided additional supports.				X	
School boards should work with the provincial government to assure access to early childhood education and quality before and after school care programs.				X	
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.				X	
School boards should advocate for the Learning Commission recommendation on class sizes at all grade levels.				X	
School boards should advocate for renewed emphasis on the arts, trades and language learning in their schools.				X	
School boards should advocate for appropriate				X	

programs and supports for ESL students.

Please comment on any of the above statements: Boards should advocate for community schools, however, there are great alternate programs which are helpful to certain students and should not be discounted.

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?

No Response

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?

I believe we have to form positive relationships with the government officials in charge. We need to demonstrate why we need more funding, and what results will more funding create.

3. 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
A trustee must be a team player and always defend the decisions of the board, even if the trustee disagrees with those decisions.				X	
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.				X	
Trustees should actively consult with constituents and school councils on important policy matters.				X	
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	
The provincial government has seriously undermined the power and authority of trustees and school boards.					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?

We need to be innovative. Some ideas which are not fully developed may be as follows: form more business partnerships in order to tap into their expertise and resources form foundations such as Edmonton Catholic Schools have to generate more funds Continue to work with parents through the SAC to support schools financially

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

At this point I have no opinion on this question.

3. 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
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	

Please comment on any of the above statements:

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 agree that they should, however, I believe more consultation with boards and the communities where the schools would be built is needed. Not all schools should be similar in their floor plans.

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

obviously private firms should not have any say in the operation of an educational district or its schools.

3. 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
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Private sector businesses can operate schools more cheaply and efficiently and should be allowed to do so.	X	
The financing, construction and maintenance of a school should be undertaken as a public private partnership.		X
Parents should be expected to contribute towards the cost of their children's education by paying school fees and fundraising.	X	
School boards should ban commercial advertising in schools.		X
Students should be provided with all necessary books and learning materials at no cost.		X
The public interest is best served by schools that are publicly owned and operated.		X
To address funding shortfalls, schools should be allowed to have corporate sponsors, including naming rights.	X	

Please comment on any of the above statements: School fees have always been contentious since parents are already paying taxes for schools. The problem lies in the fact that some of the programs offered are optional and includes separate expenses for the school which sometimes are not in their budget because the money is not there. Examples, Foods and fashion classes, shop classes, sports teams. All of these courses and activities includes substantial extra expense and schools could not afford to offer them unless some of the costs were picked up by parents.

School Infrastructure

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

School closures are the last thing any individual involved in education wants to see including trustees. The closing of a community school has detrimental affects not just on the families whose children attend the school but the entire community for obvious reasons. So when a school comes up for closure due to meeting policy guidelines, it is incumbent on Trustees to take the human factor into consideration and if at all possible leave the school open. In the end some hard decision may have to be made in certain situations where a school is no longer financially viable to run and has been that way for a few years, but closure should definitely be the last resort.

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: Closing schools to build new schools is not appropriate and I would not support that unless the school slated to be closed was total unviable due to an extremely low population of students and with no opportunity in the future to increase student population.