



Surrey School Board Elections, October 20, 2018 – School Trustee Candidates' Interview Summaries

Candidates for Surrey School Board were invited to in-person interviews at the Surrey Teachers' Association offices. These 18 candidates agreed to be interviewed. All candidates were asked the same ten questions, and all had the opportunity to consider the first six questions in advance. From the transcripts and recordings, we offer these two-page summaries, in which we have tried to capture the essence of the candidates' answers, while cutting out some repetition or off-topic comments.

Bob Holmes

1. What is your key, or main, motivation to run for a school trustee position?

Well I think we've done a good job in our governance role with listening to the community voice and having the voices of all the stakeholders be heard. I want to continue with that work that I started 4 years ago.

2. How do you see the role of the school trustees in addressing the issues with space, overcrowded classrooms, and new school construction in this rapidly growing district?

I have been involved with these issues for many years, first publicly as a member of DPAC 8 years ago. As a Trustee I've been working on these issues more privately with government. Even though we've done a good job by adding 7300 seats we also have had an extra 5000 students enrolled so progress is slow but things are much better than they have been for a long time and will only continue to get better.

3. Currently, Surrey is short of classroom teachers and teachers teaching on call. What ideas do you have for recruitment and retention?

This is a difficult issue because every district is looking for teachers and it's hard to keep up. If we can show that Surrey is a great place to live and a great place to teach we can hopefully bring in more teachers.

4. Surrey Schools are still short of Learning Support Teachers. How will you advocate fully implementing the language in the collective agreement so that Surrey students will have enough specialist teachers to meet their learning needs?

This is something I hope can be addressed in upcoming negotiation. I would love to see us have more LST but we're forced to go with the instructions we've been given and I hope we can change that.

5. In bargaining for a new contract, what actions will you take to ensure that BCPSEA and the Provincial government will reach a fairly negotiated contract with teachers?

Because my wife is a teacher there are some parts that I would not be able to participate in because I'd be in direct conflict. But we're in a good position because Terry Allen is on BCPSEA so he'll be able to ensure that province-wide Surrey's needs are heard and looked after. It may be that there is a mandate for only so much teacher pay and if that's the case maybe we can get more help in classrooms.

6. What is the best way for the Board to hear from and respond to concerns from parents, employees and other community members?

I think there are multiple ways that we do this already. At the Board meetings, at our Spring parent forum, online through PlaceSpeak, through email. With all the new capital projects we have had a robust process to gather input. I'm always open to ideas on how to expand the venues we already have.

7. How can the Board support the recommendations and calls to action of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission?

Our Board supports our teachers with the First Peoples' Principles of Learning being in classrooms from K - 12. But it's incumbent on trustees to learn as well. I've been involved with the professional learning committee at BCSTA and we've had lots of really good speakers and I've learned a lot. We need to do all we can to support the great work that's already going on.

8. As school trustee, how will you use your role to support the sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender identity development of Surrey students?

I'm fully supportive of SOGI and the use of program in a manner that's appropriate for all ages K-12. When people are misinforming public, trustees need to speak up. We have a motion at BCSTA to have building standards adjusted so that gender inclusivity can be included in planning right at the beginning.

9. As school trustee how will you actively advocate for a better funded public education system? What do you see as the difference between a needs-based budget, and a balanced budget?

We're always working on this, sometimes publicly, and sometimes behind closed doors with staff and the Ministry. When we can't make progress privately, we may go public, as we've done before with the issue of portables.

I'm not sure a needs-based budget is realistic. It's a very public way of advocating and somewhat confrontational. I can see some benefits. I don't know if I'm in favour but situations change.

10. How can trustees ensure that the leadership in Surrey schools reflects the diversity of Surrey's communities?

I think we need to do the best we can at hiring the best people, but always with an eye to diversity. I don't think we need to go out looking for someone who fits this exact box. This is not a change we want to force. We are getting better at the school administration level, but if you look at leadership above that level all the way to the Executive, questions could be asked. Even though we should always be looking for the best people for the job, we could do a better job at bringing in a large number of candidates so we're able to fill a diverse need.

Charlene Dobie

1. What is your key, or main, motivation to run for a school trustee position?

I am passionate about public education, I have been an EA for 20 years, I have worked in the public school system, with many teachers, many other staff and many children. We can do a better job, here in Surrey. We have a good school district, I did work in Surrey for 14 years, but when I was elected in 2011 I had to resign and I worked in Delta. I still have that passion that we can do a better job in Surrey.

2. How do you see the role of the school trustees in addressing the issues with space, overcrowded classrooms, and new school construction in this rapidly growing district?

Yes, I have experience with my 3 years on the board, although at the time I was a rookie, I was vocal. At the time we had some "interesting" ministers of education, but this time, I am determined we can have better conversations with the ministers. We need to work with the MLAs, all of them, and with mayor and council. Trustees need to keep that top of mind, to interact with these other politicians. The District often says that they meet with the City but to my mind that meeting is just one way with the City telling the District what they're going to do. There's no real consultation, no real collaboration. Our team, Surrey Students Now is all on the same page on this and we can take turns to do what needs to be done on this. The last time I was a trustee there were all kinds of plans but this time I want to focus on what we are actually going to do.

3. Currently, Surrey is short of classroom teachers and teachers teaching on call. What ideas do you have for recruitment and retention?

It's difficult but I think it is doable. If we strive to make Surrey the best school district in the province, we can attract people to come here. There are things that aren't perfect, but we can look at how to improve it, by asking the teachers! We could also ask the other support staff, we are short of EAs, but how?, let's ask them!

Let's talk to HR and see what they can come up with by talking to the actual workers we have.

4. Surrey Schools are still short of Learning Support Teachers. How will you advocate fully implementing the language in the collective agreement so that Surrey students will have enough specialist teachers to meet their learning needs?

Having attended every board meeting since Jan 2015 I've heard various people from the STA speak to this issue many times. You know during question period, it seems to me that the district has kind of been playing a shell game, moving positions and renaming positions and then saying those are the LST positions. The bottom line: if students are being denied services then that's not good, and if the collective agreement is not being followed that has to be corrected, immediately.

My best ever classroom even now after all these years as an EA, was in Surrey. That because the teachers were caring and understanding and great leaders. When you have teachers who you've worked with and they've shown the amazing ability to do that, and it's wonderful for the kids and it's wonderful for the staff.

5. In bargaining for a new contract, what actions will you take to ensure that BCPSEA and the Provincial government will reach a fairly negotiated contract with teachers?

Surrey will have a rep at the BCPSEA table like we did before. As a trustee I will be advocating to make sure that teachers get a fair deal. I work in public education, so I see what teachers do, and I see that teachers go above and beyond what their mandate is. Teachers become parents to kids... they become social workers, they provide food for the kids, and much more, they buy their own resources and bring them into the classroom, it's just unbelievable.

Teachers in BC have been at the bottom of the pay scale for too long, so there's one thing that definitely needs to be brought to the table, and that's a pay hike so that BC teachers are no longer near the bottom of pay in the country.

6. What is the best way for the Board to hear from and respond to concerns from parents, employees and other community members?

First and foremost, question period needs to become part of the agenda at the public board meeting so that questions and answers can be shared with the public, because as you know, right now they adjourn the meeting, then they have a half hour question period, and the questions have to be written down and passed to the administrative assistant person, and answered in private. That needs to be changed right away. We could have some informal trustee meetings, maybe being able to invite the public in to those kinds of meetings. I think that trustees should attend PAC meetings. Also trustees two or three times a year should go to the staff rooms and have an conversation with the staff. And I know a lot of that does go on, but I think certainly not every trustee does that.

7. How can the Board support the recommendations and calls to action of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission?

When I was a trustee, I did put forth a motion about stating at every board meeting that we are on the lands of Katzie, Semiahmoo and Kwantlen. That was taken and changed a bit by another trustee and out into a committee, and came out as a watered-down declaration which is stated only at the first board meeting and the last board meeting of the year. How does that make our aboriginal community, our First Nations community feel welcomed? In a recent conversation with the Superintendent, the money put forth is still only for cultural events, has been for the students who identify as first nations, but where can we get some more money so it can be embedded in the curriculum, so that we can have the professional development needed?

8. As school trustee, how will you use your role to support the sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender identity development of Surrey students?

I fully support SOGI 123. That's another place where we need some more funding, some designated funding, to present it to the teachers to work on that. I know that some training has gone on, probably through the BCTF and the

through the district as well, but we obviously need to be more. I think that as a trustee I would be supporting and making the community know where I stand. We need to be informing people about what it is.

9. As school trustee how will you actively advocate for a better funded public education system?

I had a question from a teacher in the summertime and he challenged me to find out how much more Vancouver had than Surrey even though we're a bigger district by about 25000 students or so. So I did, and I took their budget number and our budget and divided it by the number of students. And yes, Vancouver does get \$200 more per student, which is 14 million dollars. Obviously this needs fixing, I think there are ways to do that, by connecting with MLAs, Minister of Education, politician to politician, and say, here it is, and of course to get our Secretary Treasurer break it down some more.

What do you see as the difference between a needs-based budget, and a balanced budget?

I know in the past, this has been a big topic, where districts have put in a needs-based budget and not balanced it, and then been fired. I think we could have an option to do both. Say to the Ministry, this is what Surrey needs, and here is our balanced budget. For example, here is \$8.5M that could be used for operating funds which has been used to take care of portables or get new portables, and that's wrong. Take that 8.5 million and make it separate funding and use it for the resources we need, which is more teachers, more support staff, more programs to help our kids. I think we could definitely do that, have two budgets, and have that good conversation with the politicians, the MLAs, the minister of education.

10. How can trustees ensure that the leadership in Surrey schools reflects the diversity of Surrey's communities?

I think about what trustees can do as part of hiring committee for principals and vice principals. I think that those are things that need to be top of mind when we are thinking about diversity, as in women and different cultures which are represented in our community which is very multicultural, getting more and more all the time. I think those things can be top of mind when trustees are actually at the table, encouraging from the top down. I think as trustee we can ask questions, why has this person not been invited?

Cindy Dalglish

1. What is your key, or main, motivation to run for a school trustee position?

It was born out of necessity. I started advocating for my daughter's program, and it opened my eyes to all the other issues that we're having in the District. Our current board has been very quiet. They could do a much better job in terms of advocating and lobbying for our students. It's actually in the job description and they're not doing their job.

2. How do you see the role of the school trustees in addressing the issues with space, overcrowded classrooms, and new school construction in this rapidly growing district?

It all comes down to advocacy. Neighbourhood concept plans are deviated from constantly (NCP), and the developments are amended, but they didn't amend for the schools. Trustees didn't lobby for the need for additional schools!

I will continue to be vocal whether elected or not. I've established good relationships, so I can reach out to discuss the issues. I think we need to motivate staff to get creative, in the short term. It's supposed to be short term. We're pulling \$8 million dollars out of our operating budget to pay for portables? It doesn't help that Vancouver gets \$200 more per student. That's another approximately \$14 million dollars that Surrey students should be getting. Current board hasn't said anything! It all comes down to using our voices and not being quiet.

3. Currently, Surrey is short of classroom teachers and teachers teaching on call. What ideas do you have for recruitment and retention?

It comes down to the fact that we don't pay our teachers enough. We need to do a better job lobbying the government. Especially with the housing affordability issues. We need to make this an attractive option. Give teachers ability to teach in the areas where they live.

[We should be] coming up with ideas that we haven't thought of before, or fully explored. Let's be creative and push those boundaries.

Teachers don't have opportunity to give feedback to the district because they're afraid of their bosses. Want to sit in a room with teachers to hear from them what the issues are so trustees can better advocate.

4. Surrey Schools are still short of Learning Support Teachers. How will you advocate fully implementing the language in the collective agreement so that Surrey students will have enough specialist teachers to meet their learning needs?

We need to educate the public on the difference between an IST teacher and an LST teacher. It's a source of frustration that they're making an equivalency between the two. So they boosted numbers for IST but they they have not restored for LST. There's a collective agreement and we're bound to it. No ifs, ands, or buts about it.

Maybe we need to have an interpretation guide for the Collective Agreement so everyone's on the same page when they leave the room, so we don't have to spend time and resources figuring it out later. We can get started right away.

5. In bargaining for a new contract, what actions will you take to ensure that BCPSEA and the Provincial government will reach a fairly negotiated contract with teachers?

We talked about this earlier, how do we retain/recruit for Surrey? We need to pay them better; compensation needs to be a priority this round. People will come here and live here if they feel they are being compensated fairly. If this is a place they want to live. Making sure that interpretation guides are there; so we come out of the collective agreements so we can get started right away. If we don't support the teachers, they won't be able to support the students. We have to do better than that. The government needs to do better. As a board, we need to not placate, and not minimize the issues, [and we should] use the media to talk about the issues.

6. What is the best way for the Board to hear from and respond to concerns from parents, employees and other community members?

I've been to most of the school board meetings in the last couple of years. It's a source of major frustration to stand up in front of your school board and it's all off the record, and you only have a short period of time for your preamble before asking your question. Then you have to wait weeks or months for an answer.

First thing I would do is make the question period part of the record so that others can hear and see the answers to the questions. You ask the question publicly, but get an answer privately. That needs to change. We created a Facebook page called Surrey School Board Q&A so people could share their answers.

It all comes down to opening those communication channels.

7. How can the Board support the recommendations and calls to action of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission?

I love this question! It can be something as simple as actually acknowledging the land that we're on at every board meeting, rather than just the first and the last meeting of the year.

We were at a school announcement for the addition for Sullivan, and the person that came to do the welcome did a wonderful job and her voice just reverberated across the entire courtyard. Then Laurie came up and introduced the trustees that were there, and they all stood right in front of her to block her out! I just still remember the disrespect of that.

There's still a lot of work to be done I don't have all the answers, but I know there are partners out there that can speak to this better, that can help us shape what it looks like for future students that are aboriginal and make it better and make it more inclusive for them.

8. As school trustee, how will you use your role to support the sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender identity development of Surrey students?

I fully 1000% support SOGI 123. I've been vocal about that and will continue to vocal. We're working with Dr. Jen Marchbank to run a SOGI 123 information session on the 28th. Not only do we support it, but that we want others to understand it because there's a lot of misinformation out there. We want to do more professional development with our staff that may be struggling to understand the purpose or how to invest purpose that into the classroom. We know it's not curriculum. We know it is a resource. I think that's a really big piece of it, is to incorporate it every day into our daily thought process, our language, how we work with our students, how we make them feel comfortable and safe. We need to support safe, inclusive classrooms. Full stop. If you can't do that, maybe this isn't the environment for you.

9. As school trustee how will you actively advocate for a better funded public education system? What do you see as the difference between a needs-based budget, and a balanced budget?

We need more schools, not bigger schools. In bigger schools, student start to get lost because there are just that many more people trying to reach those programs. Use the analogy of the basketball team. 12 team members, in a school of 1000. Add 700 more students who are potentially interested in the basketball team and there's just that many more kids not getting on the basketball team. More schools, not bigger schools.

What are we willing to do to make sure that our foundation is laid now so it doesn't cost us later? We want to see less homelessness, less poverty, less crime. It all starts in the foundation of our children. We can't decide how students arrive at school, or where they come from. We need to be ready and set up to meet the needs of all our students.

I will continue to use my voice and those communication channels. If at the end of the day, we can't get the province to make education a priority maybe we need to force that issue a different way.

Need to see both a balanced budget and a need- based budget. Trustees need to do a better job illustrating what the needs actually are and advocating to close the gap between the two.

10. How can trustees ensure that the leadership in Surrey schools reflects the diversity of Surrey's communities?

We can start doing some mentoring. We can start reaching out to teachers who seem to show interest in the leadership roles, and start grabbing them earlier, rather than waiting for them to come to us. Students need to see themselves reflected in order to feel safe, secure, invested in. As a trustee, I'm part of the hiring package. If I see the same names on a list that are not getting to the interview stage, I want to start questioning why are they showing interest and why are we not looking to them? [I would be] asking more questions about the process.

Dean McGee

1. What is your key, or main, motivation to run for a school trustee position?

My main motivation is my kids. I have three kids. They all have designations, all have IEPs. It took years to get designations for two of them. One has autism, one has nonverbal learning disorder, and youngest has ADHD. He was disruptive in K and Gr. 1, that assessment got done fast, but the other ones took forever. The frustration of dealing with all that. It really came to a head at the time of the lockout in 2014, and I had the education minister's office right in the catchment of our schools. I ended up being one of the organizers of the recall campaign that didn't go forward. That got me into the political realm.

2. How do you see the role of the school trustees in addressing the issues with space, overcrowded classrooms, and new school construction in this rapidly growing district?

We definitely need to do more. Trustees need to be advocating for the district. Need to be loud. We need to be saying more classrooms, more buildings. City is saying they won't build houses until we build sewer and water mains, but they'll build houses without a school in the neighbourhood. It's not a new problem, but so much worse, in the last 16

years, Surrey has grown so fast, it's so different from other districts. I don't know if that's accurate, but heard Vancouver is down 8,000 students... and we're adding 1,200 this year. As a trustee, in my position in DPAC, and on NDP provincial council, I'm on all those things for my kids, and I'll keep advocating for Surrey's kids, and my kids in all of those venues.

3. Currently, Surrey is short of classroom teachers and teachers teaching on call. What ideas do you have for recruitment and retention?

I'd like to see PDP spaces at a place like SFU Surrey, so people can be trained here, staying here, can graduate from Surrey high school, N Delta, Langley, feel like Surrey is home, don't have to go to big city. I'd like to see them trained in Surrey. I'd like to see more time for LST, for IST to have more time with kids, and what I think that will require is more support staff, so that you don't have an integration teacher spending their time trying to order some piece of equipment and never seeing the kids. There are a lot of names in the school board office not dealing with kids, and we need people working with the kids.

4. Surrey Schools are still short of Learning Support Teachers. How will you advocate fully implementing the language in the collective agreement so that Surrey students will have enough specialist teachers to meet their learning needs?

There's a lot of people in the board office, the DEC, that don't spend time with kids. The helping teachers are really useful--they literally live up to their name, but still there's a lot of people that don't spend time with the kids. If we can't get enough LSTs to cover the numbers we're talking about, then I think having more support staff will at least take the pressure off the specialists so that they can spend their time with the kids. Another thing, is again to use my voice with the [NDP] party, and say "This is what we're having in Surrey, and without the extra seats they won in Surrey in May they would not be in the government, and they need to hold Surrey." I'm on the provincial council... we'll keep the pressure on.

5. In bargaining for a new contract, what actions will you take to ensure that BCPSEA and the Provincial government will reach a fairly negotiated contract with teachers?

I'd make sure that I'm supporting it to the [NDP] provincial council. But we're actually looking at what we can do to pull Surrey out of the BCPSEA. Who's the employer? The first thing the settlers would do, the first government in a town, is people pooled their money together and hired a teacher. That's where the first school boards came from, and they were basically independent for 150 years, and in the Nineties came up with this "provincial bargaining." I'd get Surrey out of the BCPSEA, and we would work with the teachers, we'd have to figure out what sort of agreement we come to, and that would have to be the whole negotiating. We need to be pushing for more money for Surrey. The other 59 [school districts] can fight for themselves, we're all there for our kids, but I'll be there for our kids.

6. What is the best way for the Board to hear from and respond to concerns from parents, employees and other community members?

The board, the trustees, definitely need to be more responsive with the questions that come up at the board meetings. There needs to be communication at that meeting. Everyone is told thanks, we'll be in touch, fill out the yellow form, hand it in. Ok there's going to be questions that you can't answer in the room, but it simply applies to everybody, they don't answer anybody. More communicating with the community. We need to have the board involved in DPACs and PACs, be out there showing their faces, be accessible and communicate.

7. How can the Board support the recommendations and calls to action of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission?

I don't know what the calls to action are, but I would certainly look at what they've said. I know we've had Aboriginal workers assigned to every school. Nobody's been doing the territorial acknowledgement at DPAC, can we get the script so we can do it. It's a start. For a lot of us, it's the first time we're learning about it, what do they mean "unceded land"?...I don't know what actually came out of the Truth and Reconciliation, but we'd have to follow up on what they've said.

8. As school trustee, how will you use your role to support the sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender identity development of Surrey students?

There are two areas; one is education where kids need to learn what is going on as just part of the general sex education, it needs to be at a level appropriate to them. A lot of schools bring in a speaker to talk to kids about sex ed. Parents sometimes look over the topic and say it's a little much for that age, and they sign their kids out. Overall kids need to understand what is going on. If someone is different, what that means. The second is anti-bullying. And the fact that if kids understand, yeah that kid's different, we all have our differences, and whether that difference is sexual orientation, or appearance, or special needs, well everybody gets included.

9. As school trustee how will you actively advocate for a better funded public education system?

I'd take it to provincial government and NDP party and talk to the Treasury Board members. We had Jagrup Brar on Treasury Board, and Bowinn Mah, aside from cabinet ministers. Bowinn owes me a gelato, and Jagrup, I'm a block outside his riding, but his office is closest to where I live. We can bring it to them, and to the party, and frankly as a party, if you want to hold on to those seats in Surrey, you have 72,000 kids, and close to 72,000 parents, and most of them are voters, so I'd take that both to the party, and also of bringing it to the Treasury Board. We need more for education and need more of it going to Surrey.

What do you see as the difference between a needs-based budget, and a balanced budget?

Interesting. The fact is that Surrey has gone through years of falling behind on the construction and the staffing, and nobody has come out with anything like a needs budget. I know Vancouver had theirs, and was when the previous board got fired. But I've got a day job, I could take that risk. I could make a show of resigning from provincial council to make noise. The idea of a needs budget needs to be out there. The current capital plan doesn't catch up with the population. A needs capital budget would say we don't need 9 schools in 8 years, but 13, 14, 15 schools in the same length of time. If dealing with 350 portables, that's 350 classrooms. If an elementary is 20 or less, that's a lot of schools.

10. How can trustees ensure that the leadership in Surrey schools reflects the diversity of Surrey's communities?

Another part of that is having training, PDP, B.Ed, have it in Surrey, attract people to stay in Surrey, and mix of population will start to reflect people who are here. My first thing was that if you have training within Surrey, if people are staying in Surrey, and just generally making it a livable place people would want to stay and live and work in, then going to end up with a group of teachers and administrators and staff that looks like the neighbourhood.

Diana Ng

1. What is your key, or main, motivation to run for a school trustee position?

I want to play a bigger role in our education system and I want to advance our school. I want to be an active member of the Trustee. My own children went to our public school system. They graduated. They are now in health care professional field, so I do have faith in our local schools. I do believe that education is a basic human right and it must be protected.

2. How do you see the role of the school trustees in addressing the issues with space, overcrowded classrooms, and new school construction in this rapidly growing district?

We have to build new schools or build new additions to schools. What is being asked is not enough. Surrey must be seen with an exceptional growth rate. So I see the role of a school trustee with the school issue is to actively advocate for more space, for more classrooms, for more school construction.

3. Currently, Surrey is short of classroom teachers and teachers teaching on call. What ideas do you have for recruitment and retention?

The key piece is we build new schools so that the money will come out of the capital budget, instead of when we use portables, it's coming out of the operations budget which is same pot of money we're using to pay teacher salaries. So when we build new schools, we should have enough more money to hire classroom teachers.

The other piece is a separation from the BCPSEA and that would give us more power, or more direct negotiation to ask for money, more money for the teachers.

The other piece is to work with Kwantlen and SFU to develop teaching programs locally. They recruit most of the students locally and the students are from Surrey, so the likelihood of them staying in Surrey would be higher. We [should] hire locally.

We raise teacher salaries so it's more competitive with the other provinces. I understand that Alberta pays their teachers better. We offer a signing bonus and assistance with housing. So another idea may be for Kwantlen & SFU to have housing for their students. Which new teachers maybe could go there; we could offer it to them. And that would help with recruitment.

4. Surrey Schools are still short of Learning Support Teachers. How will you advocate fully implementing the language in the collective agreement so that Surrey students will have enough specialist teachers to meet their learning needs?

I value learning support teachers so I would have to advocate for the development for separate recruitment to attract and to retain specialized teachers. And this would include a signing bonus.

5. In bargaining for a new contract, what actions will you take to ensure that BCPSEA and the Provincial government will reach a fairly negotiated contract with teachers?

Proudly Surrey's platform is to separate from BCPSEA. If that's not possible we will monitor and contract development and advocate for fair settlement with the teachers. I will consult with the teachers during contract discussions frequently.

6. What is the best way for the Board to hear from and respond to concerns from parents, employees and other community members?

I went to several meetings; and I, based on my observation, would encourage to create a welcoming environment. From the meetings I've attend, I felt the current trustees are disengaged from with our parents. Most parents in Surrey are working parents. They come from Vancouver. They can't afford the rent there, so they move out here. We know that. So by the time they show up at a meeting, they're really making an effort. The trustees sit back. I'm going to say they're complacent, there's not much energy in them, they don't smile. If I was a parent with an issue I want to talk to someone about, I think it would take a humongous courage to get up. Just 'cause of the way the room is set up. The room is set up that they are on a podium. I don't know why. The second you're on a podium, the dynamics are setting up a power. You've lost that. You've lost. You're telling people you know it all. You don't. You've lost the piece about service. Service requires listening. There's minimal, actually there's discouragement of listening. That's my observation. If parents have a question, they go and write it on this yellow piece of paper, they bring it up to another table. So even that act alone separates from the school board trustee. It's like going to another department. I don't see why the school trustees could not answer questions or engage in conversation...I understand if parents want budget something concrete like numbers, they do need to go and research, I can appreciate that. However, there were minimal attempts in reaching over to the parents. And I believe leadership position must be about service. And I think that's lost there.

And school trustees [need to] visit schools. I hear they don't visit schools. They pretty well stick to the one meeting a month. This is what I'm hearing. A faster response time. Parents have concerns. Don't make them wait a couple of months. And welcome contact with parents in terms of letters, emails or telephones. Really welcome them.

7. How can the Board support the recommendations and calls to action of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission?

I attended the blanket activity. It was most powerful. And I think every single teacher should go there and experience that exercise. I see there are orange t-shirts out there to be distributed to the students, that would bring awareness to the truth and reconciliation. I think we should have pro-d days teaching teachers about truth and reconciliation. I think sometimes we create a curriculum and hand it to the school, we assume the teachers have the ability to teach them or know enough. They might not. They might have their own stuff in their brain they might have to clear up.

8. As school trustee, how will you use your role to support the sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender identity development of Surrey students?

I would promote the teaching of SOGI. Is a human right. It is a curriculum that has been adopted by our school district. The writing of curriculum, I understand, comes from province. I don't think we have control over what goes in there. However, it's a basic human right and the intent of school is to provide a safe environment for ALL children. Schools job is to provide a safe learning environment.

9. How can trustees ensure that the leadership in Surrey schools reflects the diversity of Surrey's communities?

The best would be that schools intentionally recruit from a diverse set of people. If I was a school board trustee, I would ask that our hiring practices be review by the administration. Let's look at it and see where we can improve. I would encourage people of various diversity to apply, and I would have a mentoring system in place. I would also get administration to review salaries of various genders. To my understanding, in the past I don't know now, male teachers get more pay than female teachers. But I don't know about now. Let's review it. And while we're doing that, we include gender, race, ability. Sexual orientation. That's what I would do.

10. As school trustee how will you actively advocate for a better funded public education system? What do you see as the difference between a needs-based budget, and a balanced budget?

I think our main platform would be to separate from BCPSEA. We can represent the teachers better. We would do the direct negotiation. And we would be able to go to the province to say we need more money. We need to be treated more uniquely than Vancouver or Burnaby or New West. Our growth rate supersedes any money you give us. Surrey kids deserve the same schools as the other districts.

A balanced budget is working within whatever dollars they give you. And needs is our own assessment of what we need. The actual need of Surrey. I know that by the time they give us the money, the number of children entering our schools has already exceeded the budget. So to go into bargaining I think the best is to have what they give you as the balanced budget, and to have a needs budget with you and say, well you give us this much but it would be better if you give us THIS much. Prepare both.

Dupinder Kaur Saran

1. What is your key, or main, motivation to run for a school trustee position?

I have several. I am a nurse with 20 years in nursing, lots of volunteer work with the community, with youth. My key main focus is on mental & physical health, looking for preventative measures from an early age, especially with mental health & focusing on balance. The learning environment should be healthy for children; it takes them into their adult life, lets them be optimal in what they want to become. I'm passionate about children and helping others; that's where my passion for teachers comes in. Teachers also need more support.

2. How do you see the role of the school trustees in addressing the issues with space, overcrowded classrooms, and new school construction in this rapidly growing district?

I see it as a big responsibility. [We need to take it] as a dedication and commitment that you have to put forward. We need to determine strategic plans that work well with the community. That are attainable and measurable. I wouldn't want to send out a message that's unrealistic.

[And of course it is] very important to figure out where the funding will come from to help with the goals.

3. Currently, Surrey is short of classroom teachers and teachers teaching on call. What ideas do you have for recruitment and retention?

I tend to inspire a lot of people through my community work. I have a lot of followers that way. My realistic goal would be to retain teachers is to create a balance of life for them. Look at the amount of children they have in the classroom.

Create approaches [so] that they're happy at work, retain them longer. How to get the community to want to work with us. Teachers need support... so EAs [may need to] get more hours. Teachers need to live the life they want while working with students. I'm very good at creative planning, I do a lot of projects within the community and I am quite good at leadership.

4. Surrey Schools are still short of Learning Support Teachers. How will you advocate fully implementing the language in the collective agreement so that Surrey students will have enough specialist teachers to meet their learning needs?

Definitely by advocating, and supporting the teachers. The requirement that was ordered by the Supreme Court should be fulfilled. I would definitely put a message out there on behalf of the teachers for Learning Support Teachers. Our slate is promoting the full restoration of the contract, and hope to come up [with different methods.]

5. In bargaining for a new contract, what actions will you take to ensure that BCPSEA and the Provincial government will reach a fairly negotiated contract with teachers?

I think when it comes to contracts, definitely collaboration on both sides, compromising on certain areas is necessary. Definitely need to know what the teachers want, but for me priority falls on students. We need to look at all aspects of what's involved.

6. What is the best way for the Board to hear from and respond to concerns from parents, employees and other community members?

I think communication is very important, without communication and collaboration you don't always succeed and it's not a win-win. Need to be transparent need to see parent, teacher, and children's concerns. [We should be available to communicate] by emails, newsletters, keeping our doors open for parents or staff with concerns, whatever way possible to make approach easy.

7. How can the Board support the recommendations and calls to action of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission?

I think school board should be again very open with their messages what they support, and what they don't support and elaborate why. School board needs to have more discussion with city council on aspects of school policy; more meetings throughout the year.

8. As school trustee, how will you use your role to support the sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender identity development of Surrey students?

Again, I think diversity and inclusiveness is very important. Coming up with strategies for students and staff to be supported. We can ...provide material or support through whatever means is necessary. Bring the discussion within the classroom in a safe manner so no bullying or harassment going on.

9. As school trustee how will you actively advocate for a better funded public education system?

I would definitely have ongoing communication at a municipal level, and be asking for more communication at the provincial level. City of Surrey is growing rapidly, so it is not just a municipal problem. The province needs to take some responsibility for supporting municipality with growth.

What do you see as the difference between a needs-based budget, and a balanced budget?

Needs based, well that is very obvious, have to fulfill all the needs for students, staff, necessary resources for providing the needed services. Balanced approach is better, [asking] how can we allot them better, make it more transparent at all levels. That's what's missing, the communication and transparency.

10. How can trustees ensure that the leadership in Surrey schools reflects the diversity of Surrey's communities?

Having a school board of trustees with various ethnic groups involved. We have diverse children, French immersion, francophone. Try to collaborate with all communities and backgrounds. We need to work within our schools and out in

the communities as well. Hiring [we need people from] different backgrounds so they're able to bring in new ideas to the school system, new ideas how to teach students that might be more effective.

Garry Thind

1. What is your key, or main, motivation to run for a school trustee position?

I want every child in Surrey to have an excellent system supporting schools and teachers in the daily work that they do, and to work with the students. I understand the importance of public education. My three kids, they go to McLeod Road Traditional School.

Our local needs are quite different from other cities, and I want to support local schools in district by playing a formal role in having wise governance.

2. How do you see the role of the school trustees in addressing the issues with space, overcrowded classrooms, and new school construction in this rapidly growing district?

It's very important for me to continue to advocate for capital funding for new schools. Obviously our schools are overcrowded ... we have tons of portables here in Surrey, I think we are at 337 or something, adding 17 more this year. I think very important for the Ministry to understand the need to put Surrey in a different picture... rather than comparing with other school districts. The list of new capital requirements for the next ten years is close to \$1 billion, that's what we need for Surrey today. Students need quality learning environment, and portables are absolutely not a permanent solution.

3. Currently, Surrey is short of classroom teachers and teachers teaching on call. What ideas do you have for recruitment and retention?

I want to make sure that we are on competitive ground with the surrounding districts. [For example] honouring time spent as a TOC in other districts, actively support recruitment and hiring, support the hiring of priority teachers on call as immediate relief, people we can send to schools in need.

4. Surrey Schools are still short of Learning Support Teachers. How will you advocate fully implementing the language in the collective agreement so that Surrey students will have enough specialist teachers to meet their learning needs?

I will strongly advocate to fully fund to restore these positions, and I will advocate to BCPSEA, that any resolution of LST teachers' time shall not come at the expense of other teaching positions, that this needs to be new money coming out of the Ministry.

McLeod Road Traditional Elementary where my kids go to, [is] almost 85 to 90% Indo-Canadian students. The school size is 230, and I know with the new formula 1 LST for approximately 300 students, you only have one LST there, and that LST is busy, I can tell! So that formula should be changed. [I will] go to any extent to get that changed.

5. In bargaining for a new contract, what actions will you take to ensure that BCPSEA and the Provincial government will reach a fairly negotiated contract with teachers?

I personally support a respectful and collaborative process, and I will continue to ask for national comparison, just to make sure that our teachers are compensated at the rate consistent with the national average.

6. What is the best way for the Board to hear from and respond to concerns from parents, employees and other community members?

I will be accessible and available, as I always have, particularly to my community and, to everyone, not just Indo-Canadians. I will also continue to reach out through liaison meetings, community forums and be visible in community which I always do. I try to go on Indo-Canadian television, just to pass on the message that Surrey is facing the

challenge, and we are low on teachers, if you know of any friends or family members, tell them to come to Surrey; it's a wonderful district, with... the best staff.

7. How can the Board support the recommendations and calls to action of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission?

I know in the past that lots of mistakes have been made by the previous governments for Indigenous communities, they should have the same learning standard, and they should be treated fairly and with equal dignity and respect.

8. As school trustee, how will you use your role to support the sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender identity development of Surrey students?

Again, I'm a strong believer in inclusion. Every student has the right to freedom of expression and Charter rights and freedoms should not be compromised in any which way. As you know, SOGI is a curriculum, is a resource, and I think teachers should use that resource whenever they want, and I'm fully in favour of that.

9. As school trustee how will you actively advocate for a better funded public education system?

I have been doing since I was a trustee for 4 years, we are meeting with local representatives or MLAs, ministers on a regular basis, The funding was cut for the Welcome Centre, settlement workers. So, I was first one to raise voice against it and I basically reached out to all the local MPs. As a group we forced them to renew funding, which they did for 2 years, and then after two years it got renewed for another 3 years.

I'm glad that in past four years since I am trustee we have been able to get almost 7,300 new seats in Surrey. But that's not enough, as I mentioned earlier.

What do you see as the difference between a needs-based budget, and a balanced budget?

We take an oath when we become a trustee to balance the budget. One of the thing we have to do, right? I know I am totally in favour of needs-based budget, but, again, at the same time, we to see at the end of the day, if our budget is balanced or not, and if it's not, then that means we are not doing our job right.

10. How can trustees ensure that the leadership in Surrey schools reflects the diversity of Surrey's communities?

Very important. I think when I became a trustee I saw the lackage of representation from Indo-Canadian community, and I raised that at one of our in-camera meetings, that I do not see any Indo-Canadian represented at a senior higher position, or Chinese or Filipino community. Personal here, like, why can't we find? As I know Indo-Canadian community is over 35% in Surrey, don't we find anyone capable of doing that job? ... With all due fairness, our HR department, they are doing the best job to identify the best suitable candidate. I'm a very firm supporter of basically a mixed group rather than just one party.

Gary Tymoschuk

1. What is your key, or main, motivation to run for a school trustee position?

I believe in public education in our province and country, certainly in Surrey! My experience in leadership roles in the community and in business provides us with skills knowledge experience to be able to guide the district in the direction that provides the best possible education for all of our students, and a fantastic work environment for all our employees.

2. How do you see the role of the school trustees in addressing the issues with space, overcrowded classrooms, and new school construction in this rapidly growing district?

This is the most important of so many important issues. Space has been and continues to be an important issue. We've gone up in the number of portables. Our staff and board chair are communicating regularly with Victoria, whether with minister of education or at the staff level. We want way more schools than we have today. 340 is way

too many portables, we may always have some but that is way too many. We are relying on portables too much. This is a high priority.

3. Currently, Surrey is short of classroom teachers and teachers teaching on call. What ideas do you have for recruitment and retention?

One of my beliefs is our work as a school trustee is at the governance level, not in the day to day actions of the school district. The HR dept has primary responsibility. However, this is a global issue, but particularly in Canada and in BC that there are not enough qualified workers. Every employer has to think outside the box [to attract people], but we're bound by some things we might not like to do due to collective agreement arrangements, but as much as possible we should find ways to get the word out across the country that this is a great place to work, and promote our excellent system and great school district. There are lots of opportunities for a great career with opportunities for advancement. The west coast is great, the weather is great.

4. Surrey Schools are still short of Learning Support Teachers. How will you advocate fully implementing the language in the collective agreement so that Surrey students will have enough specialist teachers to meet their learning needs?

One area that is growing in the population is students with special needs. I'm not sure why, but it is true, more kids need extra supports. This requires investment by the provincial government, so school districts can provide supports for those students. So within our budget, we can allocate resources as much as we can. In a large district we can use economies of scale, so we can manage our money differently than a small district. We can advocate with the provincial government saying we need more money for special ed, etc.

5. In bargaining for a new contract, what actions will you take to ensure that BCPSEA and the Provincial government will reach a fairly negotiated contract with teachers?

Every bargaining negotiation should be respectful from both sides. Terry Allen on our board is our rep for BCPSEA, he has the experience and I support him. In terms of the fair agreement to make people feel proud and valued and recognized, and that includes fair compensation and benefits. It is expensive to live here and it is hard to keep up if you are only getting single digit increases. My hope is that a fair agreement comes to fruition.

6. What is the best way for the Board to hear from and respond to concerns from parents, employees and other community members?

The phrase that comes to mind, is open-door. In my time in public office that has been my way, phone email text s. We have an opportunity for people to address the board, and ask questions they may want to ask, and we respond to them. Whatever works for those people, it is important that we all have an open door at all times and are ready and willing to answer.

7. How can the Board support the recommendations and calls to action of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission?

The board has in fact made steps in that regard. We have newly appointed senior level managers in aboriginal education. The board should not be involved in day to day, but provide direction to superintendent. Working in concert with Min of Ed. Fulfill the expectation of the TRC recommendations. Our work Includes providing age-appropriate curriculum, we can't sweep this history under the rug, we have to talk about it, to ensure that youth understand that part of history and learn from that and how they'll conduct themselves moving forward.

8. As school trustee, how will you use your role to support the sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender identity development of Surrey students?

SOGI - let me take a broader perspective. Society needs to do a whole lot more to be far more accepting, inclusive of everyone. We are all different, and anything we can do to provide resources to our teachers, to achieve that, we need to do.

Do I support the SOGI resources? Yes I do. I think we need to do the best we can to support every student...feel like a valued person in society.

9. As school trustee how will you actively advocate for a better funded public education system?

That is one of our roles. So many aspects of public ed that are in need of additional funds. Whether capital or operating. Supports for things like appropriate resources.

Meetings with provincial level of government are the most important, because although some people might think other levels of government can help, they fund a lion's share of what we operate in our system.

Any and all those people who are part of the treasury/finance, we need to develop those relationships and work as much as possible to get what we need. The provincial government need recognize the needs of a district like surrey that's growing.

What do you see as the difference between a needs-based budget, and a balanced budget?

I'm not familiar with those terms. Balanced is balanced. Nothing is left. That's how we're required to operate, that is legislated. I guess a needs based budget is based on our needs. Our role is to do best we can to obtain more funding.

10. How can trustees ensure that the leadership in Surrey schools reflects the diversity of Surrey's communities?

Fairly simple answer. When we're looking to fill any position, obviously we want the best, the most qualified who can do it. We want to try to mirror the community, and we should do that to greatest extent possible with our employees. As we work with each selection committee, we have that opportunity to be mindful of that. Personally, I've always been mindful of that. Whether we're looking for gender, education.. All these weigh on my mind when the scale tips one way or another.

Julia Poole

1. What is your key, or main, motivation to run for a school trustee position?

I'm a retired teacher; worked in the district for 25+ years. I'm well qualified for the job. I'm interested in staying involved. I went to China to teach, came back and realized that our education system is really falling apart. By being in public service and civic politics I'm hoping to be more influential.

2. How do you see the role of the school trustees in addressing the issues with space, overcrowded classrooms, and new school construction in this rapidly growing district?

It's hard to keep up with the rapid increase in development here in the city. I've been after the government for a long time to change the way they allocate funds, and how they allow the school district to do their projects. Knowing that they're only allowed one project at a time is ridiculous with our rapid growth. We really need to change that formula. We cannot work within the limitations they have had us in.

3. Currently, Surrey is short of classroom teachers and teachers teaching on call. What ideas do you have for recruitment and retention?

One, the public opinion of teaching profession has to change. There really needs to be a better perspective of what the profession can give to public and how they are honoured with the way they are paid and recognized.

Two, help improve the condition of teachers. Teachers have not been supported with the new perspective of education. They've been left to develop their own curriculum. To have to develop curriculum to match every student is a really impossible task so they need to be more supported that way with the curriculum.

And then the other thing is that the government realizes that the resources in the lesson plans not have to be out of the teachers own pocket, that they have to provide more of this for teachers and not expect that the teachers will just pick up the slack.

4. Surrey Schools are still short of Learning Support Teachers. How will you advocate fully implementing the language in the collective agreement so that Surrey students will have enough specialist teachers to meet their learning needs?

So first is to change the perspective of the government has of how they allocate those funds, and so we can provide more support for teachers and students. And the other thing is that the shared resource, the shared personnel has to be shared with several students...That is such unrealistic point of view of the way of helping students, because it's a relational thing and you know we need to have those continual relationships with those students.

5. In bargaining for a new contract, what actions will you take to ensure that BCPSEA and the Provincial government will reach a fairly negotiated contract with teachers?

Well I think that they have to trust each other, and that both of them have to do their homework on both sides. I do think you just really have to trust that if that side of the party says this is their needs, that the other side has to try to meet that, and not cut back and say well you know this is what will give you if you take away this...I think that we're just gonna have to bargain harder. We're not taking away benefits and things anymore. I think that that is just not part of the formula now. They're not gonna give up.

6. What is the best way for the Board to hear from and respond to concerns from parents, employees and other community members?

I am a great advocate for having town meetings or having think tanks and collaborating with all parties involved. We need to be at the table with each other and need to have more opportunities to be able to share each other's ideas so more public meetings, town halls, think tanks together. [Trustees] need to be out in public more and hear what public has to say. I think that in the past we haven't had many educators on our board, and so they're not very experienced. They might not even have children, and I even hear that some of them don't even live in Surrey anymore.

7. How can the Board support the recommendations and calls to action of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission?

I think we're being pretty proactive with this particular area. I think that there are other areas that we could maybe do a better job with.

I think that they dedicate time towards the development of that inclusion end of the curriculum. And providing schools with resources to be able to do that. And also I think I actually recognizing aboriginal territories that we are currently on. I think that that's really important.

8. As school trustee, how will you use your role to support the sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender identity development of Surrey students?

Well I don't really think that's part of the Trustees position and I don't think it should be a trustee issue on this particular election because it's already been mandated by the government that this policy be enforced. But as far as identifying this particular issue for this election I don't think that's fair, because I think there's other areas in our community that are overlooked and that they should be identified as being just as important as gender identity and sexual orientation. The number of students that are struggling with this particular issue, I've done the research and it is not a large amount. So when we talk about .2% of the population, why are we putting so much emphasis? The government's already given them a lot of support. So I don't think that I need to, as a trustee, put any other special emphasis on this particular issue.

9. As school trustee how will you actively advocate for a better funded public education system? What do you see as the difference between a needs-based budget, and a balanced budget?

Besides asking the taxpayers pay more tax? I noticed that only 31% of our taxes go to education in Surrey. But that is a really difficult one, because there are not enough people in Surrey that are paying taxes. We have a lot of suites that are additional suites to the homeowner, that these are parents and these are families are not paying taxes and we have a lot of rental situations in Surrey, which even though the building may pay taxes, these individuals are not paying and contributing to the funding of education. I really think that possibly we could do something like the US

does, and raise levies periodically for special projects that may be for the education system. That is a really difficult question and I don't know how to get creative other than we raise the taxes on people, or we find some creative way of taxing people or having those who do not pay taxes contribute to education.

A needs-based budget is never balanced because there's always greater needs than the budget can allow. So I think it's like you have to do the best you can you help prioritize and try to meet the budget as best possible. I think that we've been doing a really good job in Surrey where we've not been in the red. We've managed to use our funding very well, and have been very creative in what we have but I know that hasn't matched the needs that are there for our community. We're gonna have to either charge developers more towards contributing to education or some other way of getting funds into the system that doesn't overdo what we've already done for the taxpayers.

10. How can trustees ensure that the leadership in Surrey schools reflects the diversity of Surrey's communities?

That's really difficult one because that means that we're drawing from the teachers who are within our district to be a part of our admin and that that's all part of developing that structure within the system... you invest time and money into the teachers that are there who will later become the leaders of your community. And so if a community has a lot of change as far as racial types that come into our community, which we have had a big influx of different countries having refugees into our city. I think it's not really possible for us to have that particular race of person in our leadership. A lot of people don't believe that I'm Chinese. I've always tried to keep my heritage and my background, but at the same time still be able show that I have assimilated to Canadian lifestyle myself, and that my leadership skills are sensitive to other cultural groups as well. Having been a minority, I think I've developed that sensitivity of knowing what it's like to be a minority.

I suppose you have to have, and maybe it'll catch up in the future, and maybe the kids we see now will want to be teachers. But in the past, the diverse groups didn't have the educational background to be in leadership. Until they have gone through the system and developed the professional skills to be part of the leadership, and unless we have some way of recognizing their skills and university background from the country of origin, we will never be able to have that come very quickly.

Laurae McNally

Laurae McNally answered first 6 questions by email and the last four in a telephone interview which we offered to her because she has a foot injury from shrapnel suffered whilst helping at a Syrian refugee camp in Jordan this summer.

1. What is your key, or main, motivation to run for a school trustee position?

I do not view Trusteeship as a "stepping stone" to higher office, or as a job, I view it as community service. My mom always said "you get out of your community what you put into it" How true! I have a passion for seeing students succeed and want them all to like school as much as I did. I am not beholden to any slate; just beholden to people in my community. My "institutional history" helps folks in getting problems resolved. I am willing to put in the time and energy to serve my community one more term.

2. How do you see the role of the school trustees in addressing the issues with space, overcrowded classrooms, and new school construction in this rapidly growing district?

Trustees play a huge role here. We need to constantly let other levels of Government know what our needs are. MPs, MLAs, City Councillors have all kinds of issues on their plate (transportation, crime, budgets, health, etc.) They cannot be experts on everything and rely upon us to keep them abreast of our needs. One meeting a year or more does not do it. It distresses me to see students crammed onto school sites like salmon beneath blocked waterfalls, and it angers me to have to use scarce operating dollars to fund portables, and to pony up money for Capital projects. Those dollars are distributed to us to be spent on students.

3. Currently, Surrey is short of classroom teachers and teachers teaching on call. What ideas do you have for recruitment and retention?

This is becoming a problem in many countries. Recruiting needs to occur year-round.

In the short term, I think we could be doing more jointly to promote the District. I was heartened late this summer, to see a "Tweet" by a Surrey teacher encouraging others to come to the District. We jointly could be doing some self promotion. Housing is a huge concern for teachers new to us. A retired teacher I know has opened up a suite in her house, renting to a new teacher here. She feels she can also be a support for this new educator. Together, we could be highlighting such an idea.

Mentoring programs are helping our new teachers, let's not overlook the value of that. We all do better when we work together.

In the longer term, teachers need to secure an appropriate wage increase through bargaining! But the government needs to seriously look at what other jurisdictions are doing.

I am familiar with initiatives in New South Wales... \$6000 signing bonuses for new teachers, assisting in paying off student debts, etc. Trustees should be making their wishes known to their BCPSEA reps.

4. Surrey Schools are still short of Learning Support Teachers. How will you advocate fully implementing the language in the collective agreement so that Surrey students will have enough specialist teachers to meet their learning needs?

This should remain high on our radar screen. Trustees have a responsibility to address this at budget time. One of my frustrations has been how long it is taking to resolve the outstanding issue of our special education staffing. I know it is in arbitration between BCTF and BCPSEA, I know there are several issues at that table, and I know they need to report by January 31/2019. Do not know if any progress being made, or why folks always have to wait until the very last minute to report out.

5. In bargaining for a new contract, what actions will you take to ensure that BCPSEA and the Provincial government will reach a fairly negotiated contract with teachers?

After a long campaign, Trustees are back in the BCPSEA Board. Each Board of Trustees should be meeting to give their desires and instructions to their region's rep.

I am still puzzled as to why bargaining is taking so long to start. Lots of red herrings thrown out, but, in my books, there is a ton of stuff to talk about!

6. What is the best way for the Board to hear from and respond to concerns from parents, employees and other community members?

Where to start! Firstly, one meeting per year with the STA is not enough. I believe we should be meeting more frequently, with just one or two topics on the agenda. How I miss the days when we had joint potluck dinners together and talked about issues.

One example. The STA wrote us a few months ago re refugee funding. Nothing ever happened about that issue. It is an issue near and dear to my heart, having spent considerable time with refugees. With a Federal election coming up quickly, we should be jointly making our needs known to our MPs as they will be doing election planning soon and developing their platforms.

I miss the liaison meetings we used to have with various multicultural communities. ...Arabic, Pilipino, Mandarin, etc. We went out to their neighbourhood schools, we did not expect them to come to us. For me, the input was invaluable. Yes, it was time-consuming. However, if you are not willing to put in the time, you shouldn't be a Trustee.

As the District continues to grow, I think we should have zonal parent mtgs. One big forum at DEC with hand selected participants doesn't give me the feedback I am looking for from parents. It is more valuable for me to chat with parents at track meets, school and District events such as Fine Arts performances.

It is a rare day I am not out at a school, and I find that time commitment useful.

7. How can the Board support the recommendations and calls to action of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission?

Well, we've made a good start in the district but I think there is more we can do. I've been encouraged by the knowledge about the TRC report that I am hearing from students, there is certainly a lot more awareness. It seems schools are taking it seriously. We mustn't stop, we need to continue, it isn't only the students, it is also the parents. I'm thinking schools can do individual PAC meetings with that as a topic, for instance.

8. As school trustee, how will you use your role to support the sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender identity development of Surrey students?

I think again, we need to support what schools are doing. I don't know how widespread it is, hopefully in every school, but a number of schools have a staff person assigned as the SOGI contact person. I am thrilled with that. Whenever we come upon people who aren't sure what SOGI is about, we need to talk to them about it. We have a role as leaders in our community, to tell people the way it is!

9. As school trustee how will you actively advocate for a better funded public education system?

I alluded to this earlier, but I think we need to be out there talking to the MLAs and other powers-that-be at every opportunity. If you are a city councillor, or MLA or MP, you have to have a grasp of a whole pile of topics, you don't pay attention to schools, so it is our job to be educating them at every opportunity. Sometimes we think they don't care, but they just don't know.

What do you see as the difference between a needs-based budget, and a balanced budget?

A balanced budget is living within the pie that the government gives you. A needs-based budget is what you really believe the district needs to operate.

10. How can trustees ensure that the leadership in Surrey schools reflects the diversity of Surrey's communities?

I think we can encourage our senior staff to go out and encourage a diverse group of people in our district to apply for these positions and to go to some of the leadership workshops that are offered. Tap people on the shoulder. It isn't that difficult.

Laurie Larsen

1. What is your key, or main, motivation to run for a school trustee position?

I have always been active in the schools, first with PTAs, then PAC at Enver Creek. I have 4 children who went through the school system, & 2 grandchildren that are currently in the school system and growing up in Surrey. My concern is the quality of education and especially for inner city schools. I am just hoping to keep going with the changes (such as removing fees, which I was successful in) in making Surrey as progressive as it can be.

2. How do you see the role of the school trustees in addressing the issue with space, overcrowded classrooms, and new school construction in this rapidly growing district?

I think it is a massive problem that we have so many children in portables. I think we must try to build a relationship with the people that are in charge of the money. I think I've been very good at establishing trust with the ministry, with the minister, and meeting with the finance minister, & MLAs, to try and build up trust because I think you need as many people as you can get to lobby for you, plus outside groups. We are pushing for more construction, and hopefully once that happens, once we can get new schools built, we can make sure that the existing schools where they are drawing children from, can now revert rooms back to the resource rooms, band rooms, music rooms, that we need. It's not just making sure the new schools are built, but that the current schools now end up with more space as well.

3. Currently, Surrey is short of classroom teachers and teachers teaching on call. What ideas do you have for recruitment and retention?

I think people have to feel that they're valued as teachers and as on call teachers. I think there are some benefits that some teachers on call have in other districts that I'd like to see implemented in our district, such as paying them for stat holidays. I think teachers should have the availability to health and wellness programs giving them access to fitness passes and mental health services. I think we've kept a really high standard when it comes to interviewing teachers and I'm really supportive of that even though we're short of teachers.

4. Surrey Schools are still short of Learning Support Teachers. How will you advocate fully implementing the language of the collective agreement so that Surrey students will have enough specialist teachers to meet their learning needs?

Part of it I think is the formula that we use - I think it's 1 LST for every 300 students ...and the problem is that that would be fine if it was just strictly the children that were designated but unfortunately we have this whole grey area of students aren't designated. It's hard because all of those fall on the LST teacher so they now have all of these students but they're not fully funded and some of them aren't funded at all. So part of it is I've been advocating and working ...to see can we change the formula.

5. In bargaining for a new contract, what actions will you take to ensure that BCPSEA and the Provincial government will reach a fairly negotiated contract with teachers?

I bargained for 15 years for 3 locals so I have a lot of bargaining experience on the union side and being in a role now as a trustee I'm on the other side, but I don't think that stops me and hasn't so far of saying what my view and opinion is. I'm very active in the BCSTA which has some influence as well. Our board was very active in getting Terry designated as a trustee on the BCSTA bargaining team.

6. What is the best way for the Board to hear from and respond to concerns from parents, employees and other community members?

I have always prided myself in making sure when somebody emails me or somebody calls me or somebody messages me, (even I had two or three today on Facebook), that I reply right away, and if I don't know the answer, I say "I will forward to the appropriate person." My phone number and address are all posted, my Facebook is posted, and so they have lots different accesses to me.

7. How can the Board support the recommendation and calls to action of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission?

I sit on the Aboriginal Council and ...it's something that's pretty important to me. I think that you just have to support it and you have to be involved and you have to talk to people and say, "Did you know?" We're a part of how, the enhancement agreement that gets going and so that's all I can say. We should be active and aware of it.

8. As school trustee, how will you use your role to support the sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender identity development of Surrey students?

I do support SOGI, it's been (and same as the LGBTQ+ rights,) it's something that's been very dear to my heart. I certainly talk about it... it's part of human rights, and I think as a trustee we need to be vocal if we're asked. We shouldn't dance around it or sort of tip-toe around it, we need to be very vocal and supportive.

9. As school trustee, how will you actively advocate for a better funded public education system?

It is underfunded. We went on a capital tour last night, to Bear Creek, and you can see how worn it is. It's still [school] space, but certainly it's not ideal for learning, there's not enough light, there's not enough colour, it's just drab and the same with the washrooms, they aren't, you know, inviting for children to use. I think funding and lobbying for funding is probably the best way to really recognize the needs of some of our older schools which the government won't replace. I think [we need to think] how a child feels about their school and that they feel proud of their school.

What do you see as the differences between a needs-based budget, and a balanced budget?

We sign an oath that says we will produce a balanced budget so as a trustee I'm obligated by law because I take an oath and I sign that I will adhere to that, but that certainly isn't what we need. So I've worked with Minister Fleming, and so has a lot of the board, [to try to] establish a different model so instead of waiting until the children are in the school [before providing funding for a new school] for Surrey we need a different formula... based on what Surrey students need.

10. How can trustees ensure the leadership in Surrey schools reflects the diversity of Surrey's communities?

[As we] promote diversity and diversity in all sections, it's not just ethnic diversity, it's sexual orientation diversity, etc, because as a trustee we represent all of the groups, plus parents. Just helping to promote it and really be intentional about when it comes to hiring because we do sit in on the interviews and some of the questions, I have interviewed quite a few vice principals and principals, and some I have found are textbook- they know the answers, they've rehearsed the answers, then when you ask them a question about the person, you realise that maybe not the type of person you want. I figure if they talk above me and I can't understand it as who I am, how are the students or the vice principals or the other teachers going to understand?

Lisa Alexis

1. What is your key, or main, motivation to run for a school trustee position?

I've lived in Surrey for last 18 years. I'm passionate about the City of Surrey. I want Surrey residents to be proud to live here. My main motivation is to be part of the positive change that is happening. To offer my experience in finance to plan ahead for new schools and for the growth in the city. Hopefully get more spaces in there, get the kids out of portables, and just really create an environment where children will have a world-class education in Surrey.

2. How do you see the role of the school trustees in addressing the issues with space, overcrowded classrooms, and new school construction in this rapidly growing district?

In finance we work a lot with analytics. Family composition, land development permits, and really just look at the planning aspect of that, what are the current numbers and projections. So, working a lot with the province and the city to see what the growth has been and what the projections are. The existing Board of Trustees has brought forward in their June meeting the approval of the 2020 capital funding project, which is very detailed and very thorough, and I think they did an excellent job working on that. When the new Board comes in we need to really look at that with a fine-toothed comb, and try to find any ways, try and find alternative funding, through local businesses, non-profit orgs. There's no question we're in desperate need of new spaces right now. We need to get our children out of portables, into classrooms, where they're not having to trudge back and forth. I mean new school construction, these things cost money. I feel my financial experience can help in those areas.

3. Currently, Surrey is short of classroom teachers and teachers teaching on call. What ideas do you have for recruitment and retention?

Quite a few years back the BC government had a special program to combat the nurses shortage in which they reimbursed tuition if they stayed, more for rural areas, Interior, Kootenays, Northwest, and they subsidized part of tuition. Some sort of provincial incentive is required. Where provincial funding lacks, federal funding needs to step in. Where they've made those allowances in the health sector, they may need to look at something like that in the education sector.

4. Surrey Schools are still short of Learning Support Teachers. How will you advocate fully implementing the language in the collective agreement so that Surrey students will have enough specialist teachers to meet their learning needs?

There's definitely a need for more learning assistance. It's hard for me, never worked for or with a union. Implementing language can be a challenge. In any job there is a learning curve for new trustees. I believe when we look at statistical data and numbers of population of children and needs within it, special needs, different development stages, as well as language barriers, when we look at statistical data it will show increase of specialist teachers is

definitely required for teachers. Both of my children required learning assistance. I see the value of that as a parent, still had to do a lot of work at home.

5. In bargaining for a new contract, what actions will you take to ensure that BCPSEA and the Provincial government will reach a fairly negotiated contract with teachers?

As mentioned, I really advocate strongly for teachers. As a parent of two children, [it's] like you guys have done all the dirty work for us at this point. Once elected I will advocate strongly for rights of teachers, standing along [side the] union they support. They deserve a top-notch compensation from the province.

6. What is the best way for the Board to hear from and respond to concerns from parents, employees and other community members?

Presently the board meets monthly, and is open to public. Contacts are public. Once elected, those things available, and once elected want to hear from teachers, parents, students. Important to stay involved by attending PAC meetings, union meetings, special groups, keeping people informed about what's happening in the district.

7. How can the Board support the recommendations and calls to action of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission?

I don't know what the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is. [Interviewer says briefly what it is.] Great question. I'm Canadian born and raised. I'm actually Métis. I grew up in Prince George as well. I think it's so beautiful what they add to our culture. The federal government has taken many steps to reconciliation and...I'm happy to see that often when there's a special event we recognize the land it's on. In the schools, through both of my children's education, my daughter's graduation, there's always a focus on native ancestry, even when I was in school there was a focus. It's really foundational in Canadian culture to teach that.

8. As school trustee, how will you use your role to support the sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender identity development of Surrey students?

I think of it in a workplace scenario. We're each encouraged to respect one another. I know my children. We have those same discussions at home regularly. Once elected, I guess sexual education is obviously in the school system. I think that's great because many parents are not comfortable talking about those things. It's important that youth in particular are encouraged to identify as they feel comfortable, and that they have the resources around them to feel included. I was asking daughter this morning whether she feels safe in her school. She said she does feel safe, but said that some of her friends that maybe are represented by a different sexuality than she does, she feels that they might not feel safe. That was concerning to me because I believe every student should feel safe.

9. As school trustee how will you actively advocate for a better funded public education system?

Just gotta keep asking. As mentioned, there's no question that we are short on funding. Unfortunately, Surrey has had a blind eye turned. The growth is just so rapid. If we had the funding, I think people would really celebrate that. I'll keep asking, and mention it anytime I have an opportunity, for anyone who has money. I've worked for non-profits, so I'm used to asking for money.

What do you see as the difference between a needs-based budget, and a balanced budget?

I've functioned most of my life on a needs-based budget. Often in the financial world large corporations & governments operate in a deficit. It's not often balanced. Sometimes in order to find a solution, it first starts with a long-term plan, and then creating steps to get to that plan. So it's probable that the school district does run at a deficit, and I think it's just a matter of assessing what those primary needs are, because we don't want to be cutting at the expense of the children or teachers.

10. How can trustees ensure that the leadership in Surrey schools reflects the diversity of Surrey's communities?

I think the electoral process helps with that. We have a very diverse community here. People are going to vote who they want to vote for, and who they feel comfortable with or relate to, so I think the electoral process is the best way to ensure that the diversity of the community is reflected.

Mary-Em Waddington

1. What is your key, or main, motivation to run for a school trustee position?

I've been an advocate in community for number of years. I have two children that have attended school in Surrey, one's graduated now and I have a son in Grade 9 so I've been attending PAC meetings and DPAC meetings, and attending Canadian Parents for French. So that's where the advocacy has taken me, and how I met Cindy and Charlene. We've been working together for the last three years...

My other passion besides education is environment, and I think that if we can't have a good environment, what's the point of anything else? So I really want to make sure that teachers have the support to raise social justice warriors and I have mad props for Annie Ohana and the work that she is doing, because kids need to be so engaged, because they're just inheriting a big mess.

2. How do you see the role of the school trustees in addressing the issues with space, overcrowded classrooms, and new school construction in this rapidly growing district?

When I started with the advocacy a few years ago, we thought we were asking questions about French Immersion and we kept getting answers back about space and capacity, and lack of capital, and portables. Obviously making sure that we have proper space for our students is the number one issue.

3. Currently, Surrey is short of classroom teachers and teachers teaching on call. What ideas do you have for recruitment and retention?

[Trustees are] the ambassadors of the District and it's our job to amplify why Surrey is a good place to work. So many families live here, why wouldn't you want to work here as well? Making sure that we have the space and resources and programs and the flexibility and the creativity and the personal autonomy in your classrooms to do all the cool amazing things that different teachers want to do to engage your students and making sure that that is really resonating with new hires.

In French Immersion, we know that we've lost so many teachers to the English stream, so that speaks to the retention. Why are we losing teachers? They're still teaching. But why are we losing specialist teachers in one area, and why are they going to a different area? We need a plan to rectify that and change that.

I've been really pleased to see that post-secondary institutions are opening up more spaces to train more teachers for the teacher shortage across BC.

4. Surrey Schools are still short of Learning Support Teachers. How will you advocate fully implementing the language in the collective agreement so that Surrey students will have enough specialist teachers to meet their learning needs?

That really does come down to an advocacy piece, and making sure that we're having conversations with the levels of government that provide funding, but also that the collective agreement is being better looked at and adhered to.

5. In bargaining for a new contract, what actions will you take to ensure that BCPSEA and the Provincial government will reach a fairly negotiated contract with teachers?

I think that that's a communication piece, and they, both parties, have to really be aware of the decisions that they're contemplating... how that affects students on the ground, how that affects teachers in their delivery, and all the other support staff that are in schools as well. The point is to make sure we always keep students at the focus of our decisions.

6. What is the best way for the Board to hear from and respond to concerns from parents, employees and other community members?

I've been frustrated over the years, when I send emails to the trustees and get no response. But also, the whole question & answer periods at the board meetings are just bizarre. They adjourn the meeting, and then the questions

come up, and so they're not part of the public record. There's no access to the people; and then staff answer the letters; the trustees don't answer the letters. This is a public meeting, and why are we not engaging with our community, and our parents better in those meetings? I mean that's honestly the simplest little tweak - making it public record. We actually created a little Facebook Page: Surrey School Board Questions and Answers so whenever we do get a letter back, we post the letters and the response on this page and then people can check out the answers if they want, and comment on them - which they do!

7. How can the Board support the recommendations and calls to action of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission?

That's a great question. We did meet with Joanne Mills (Executive Director for the First Nations Friendship Centre) because we know the protocol agreement is coming up for renewal this year and wanted to see what she had to say, because again, that's not our personal experience and we don't want to make assumptions about things. And, really had a very good engaging conversation with her about poverty. Usually when we think of poverty, we think in terms of money and assets but she was really looking at it from a suicide rate when people are in their twenties. So it's not enough to engage kids when they're little, we have to make sure that they're fully supported all the way through to grade 12 and some years after. That just really struck a chord with me, to think of poverty in a life cycle like that. So I think there's simple, honorable things that need to be done, like land acknowledgements at the board meetings. The key thing; always just to show respect.

8. As school trustee, how will you use your role to support the sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender identity development of Surrey students?

I believe my role is to make sure that schools are safe and inclusive spaces for all students of all genders, colours, whatevers, right? It is frustrating to see that there is so much resistance to SOGI, and I'm shocked that there are 2 candidates running on an anti-SOGI platform for trustee this election. I think the kids are all going to be alright. I think they need to know there is support behind them, and then they're going to drive their destinies forward and create their safe spaces.

9. As school trustee how will you actively advocate for a better funded public education system?

That's what it comes down to. I'm really pleased that we have an NDP government in power right now, and that we've seen some really good progress over the last year, in terms of funding announcements for new schools and for additions, and that's one step, but I think the other, there is a separate advocacy piece that needs to be done with the city. And that has been shockingly and woefully ignored over the last 4-8 years. The politician to politician meetings aren't even happening other than once every three to four years. There's a huge engagement piece that needs to be done with the city. It needs to be done.

What do you see as the difference between a needs-based budget, and a balanced budget?

A needs based budget is an honest reflection of what it takes to do your job. And a balanced budget is this is the money that I'm going to get, and these are the expenses... so that's where cuts happen.

10. How can trustees ensure that the leadership in Surrey schools reflects the diversity of Surrey's communities?

We're not seen so much diversity in the admin roles [which] is important because representation matters and it's important for kids to be represented.

Niovi Patsicakis

1. What is your key, or main, motivation to run for a school trustee position?

To ensure that there's the voice of an educator on the board. Because for many years the teaching perspective has been missing. Teachers are the people who really know what is needed in our schools.

2. How do you see the role of the school trustees in addressing the issues with space, overcrowded classrooms, and new school construction in this rapidly growing district?

Trustees need to collaborate with all levels of government to ensure that when we build schools or when we develop an area there's enough infrastructure. That includes schools. They need to ensure that the funding is there. Right now we're using operating funds for portables. We should not have to use our operating funds.. The money for portables should be provided by the ministry.

3. Currently, Surrey is short of classroom teachers and teachers teaching on call. What ideas do you have for recruitment and retention?

We need to ensure that the province supports the universities so that we have more teachers trained. We want qualified teachers but we want to expedite the process, but from my experience and what I've heard is that it takes too long for the machine to move. We also need to have salaries that are not competitive, each teacher remuneration [should be] the same. [Districts] shouldn't have to compete for teachers. It's harder to move whole families, perhaps housing bonus or transportation could be included.

4. Surrey Schools are still short of Learning Support Teachers. How will you advocate fully implementing the language in the collective agreement so that Surrey students will have enough specialist teachers to meet their learning needs?

I would, first of all, look at the budget part, because there have been mixed messages about the availability of money. As far as the ministry is concerned there's enough money there to meet our needs. As far as the board, Learning support and special education are always the ones who don't get support they need. The example of last years 66 cuts, and finding out that no they were wrong and we waited a whole year to get back what was cut. [We need to] ensure that decisions are not always [avoided]; tough decisions [need to be] made at the board level and not continuously being sent to arbitration. Having been a LST teacher, I know that the funding was targeted and since 2002 those children have had less support than what they need. I feel that many of the students (severely disabled/ELL) are not getting the programs they need in order to learn. If it isn't working well, we need to revamp it.

5. In bargaining for a new contract, what actions will you take to ensure that BCPSEA and the Provincial government will reach a fairly negotiated contract with teachers?

I think that trustees need to stand up for teachers. Teachers are what drives excellence in public education, They need to take a collaborative role with the unions, not an adversarial role. As a body of school trustees across the prov we need to ensure that BCPSEA is there to represent both the provincial government, school board & teachers. For too many years we've had difficulties.

6. What is the best way for the Board to hear from and respond to concerns from parents, employees and other community members?

As a trustee, what I would like to see is, more collaboration in the form of committees. Especially the committee that meets the union & school board. That needs to happen more often. Not only when there are grievances but on an ongoing basis. [The same goes for] parents and the public, [as there is] still a sense schools are not welcoming places, especially with certain cultural groups. So we need to have our schools do more, involve the community more, and the same with the students, involve students in the community, help them to be part of the community.

7. How can the Board support the recommendations and calls to action of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission?

More and more we realize that our aboriginal history is important and it's part of our fabric of being Canadian. Lot of truths that have been uncovered. But the work for this can't all be put on the shoulders of teachers, we need the board to ensure that teachers have resources to implement the new curriculum as well as the expertise.

8. As school trustee, how will you use your role to support the sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender identity development of Surrey students?

I would like to see more info on the SOGI 123 program so that there are no misconceptions about what the program does and, at the same time, trustees need to work with teachers to make sure that teachers as well are trained and are comfortable with the resources they are provided. SOGI is a program written by teachers, is educationally sound, and supported by the ministry. It's not a debate. It's there to help all children get along and respect one another.

9. As school trustee how will you actively advocate for a better funded public education system? What do you see as the difference between a needs-based budget, and a balanced budget?

For too long trustees have sat back and felt their hands were tied. The meetings that take place provincially only happen or seem to happen during election years. We have a government that is willing to listen, and so even if it means going over to Victoria on a monthly basis, and discussing over and over the issue, it's important to do so to ensure the funding is there.

There are boards that have prepared two budgets; needs based and actual. If all boards did that, it would help gov't understand what it takes to properly fund quality education.

We know that we are \$1200 less per pupil in the way funding is received in BC compared to other provinces. So that needs to change.

10. How can trustees ensure that the leadership in Surrey schools reflects the diversity of Surrey's communities?

We need to make sure that all communities are welcome and represented in our curriculum. We need to learn from each other. We need to have cultural activities and invite people in.

Rina Diaz

1. What is your key, or main, motivation to run for a school trustee position?

Parents and children... and the staff that I have met along my way. I am away from [my children] most of the day and [teachers] are the people that are spending the time with them and so I need to advocate for them and I need to advocate for my children and I need to advocate for the voices of the parents to be heard as well.

2. How do you see the role of the school trustees in addressing the issues with space, overcrowded classrooms, and new school construction in this rapidly growing district?

Surrey is growing, it's growing a lot; we need more schools, our voice should be louder as a trustee, we should be out there more, in the community, getting more stories on the newspaper, bringing awareness to the community. If trustees are seen as people who should be leaders, we should be out there in the community leading; I don't see that in the current board, so I wish to bring that to the new board.

3. Currently, Surrey is short of classroom teachers and teachers teaching on call. What ideas do you have for recruitment and retention?

Well the idea that we put forward was to take our leave from the provincial bargaining, because it didn't make sense to me to have a middle man in there; I like going straight to the source. I wanted to bring forward that idea, something as basic as saying, you know, bringing back the power to the trustees to be able to approach the Surrey Teachers Association and say, "Hey look, what if we offered this...? What if we offered that...? to retain teachers."

If different schools have different [problems], they should also be providing different rates of pay because of the fact that that's what you're dealing with. When I worked in Vancouver, I worked for the City of Vancouver and they asked what center I wanted to work at for the community. Each one had a different rate of pay and that was the reason why. Carnegie had the highest paying and it was because outside of Carnegie you had all of the drug users using drugs on the steps, right?

4. Surrey Schools are still short of Learning Support Teachers. How will you advocate fully implementing the language in the collective agreement so that Surrey students will have enough specialist teachers to meet their learning needs?

If more LST positions is what we need, that is what we should be advocating for, but it shouldn't just stop there. We need more counsellors. I don't like the fact that janitors' hours were reduced. We don't see them anymore throughout the schools. I don't like the fact that there's no longer any nurses available for our children. The supervisory aides, recess and lunch, there's not enough. Just overall around, everything needs to be looked at from a different point of view and restructured. I don't know how that can be accomplished, but I would like to be the voice to make it happen.

5. In bargaining for a new contract, what actions will you take to ensure that BCPSEA and the Provincial government will reach a fairly negotiated contract with teachers?

At the last strike what I noticed was that teachers were not being heard... What you need is people that don't have huge egos, advocating for what is needed. [We need to] make sure that the focal point is the issues at hand, is that the voices of the teachers are being heard.

6. What is the best way for the Board to hear from and respond to concerns from parents, employees and other community members?

Get out there and be in the community. The only time I ever see the board is at the board meetings. Then they have their meeting, which you're not really part of, and then they move on to Q and A, which is not an A part of it, it's just a Q period, because all we do is you stand up and ask questions, but a month, a month and a half later, you get a response as a parent. Last time they made promises that they were going to reach out to the parents and the stakeholders and the students and all of that. It hasn't happened, and here I am, running again, for that same reason.

7. How can the Board support the recommendations and calls to action of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission?

It will be a long road to actually getting to what the final goal is. But slowly, slowly start integrating programs into the schools. People don't like change very, very fast, so it would have to be a very, very slow progress, of starting that. In Bear Creek Elementary, we have a department that it deals with just mostly Indigenous students. Something like that needs to be district wide.

8. As school trustee, how will you use your role to support the sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender identity development of Surrey students?

We already have a policy in place, [and more] needs to be done [to make the public] aware that we have it, that we support it. The schools, I've noticed are pretty good, the teachers they picked up on the SOGI123 and, I seen that around at different schools, you can see that the change is happening and it's taking place already. And when it comes to, of course, people who attack children, well put me up, because that's what I'm all about... defending, you know, the people who can't defend themselves, right, so, it's not my choice as to how they wish to live their lives, but you know, it is within me to fight for their choice.

9. As school trustee how will you actively advocate for a better funded public education system?

By camping out on the legislative grounds and not leaving. Oh my goodness, they won't listen, they won't listen until you blow it up, until you drop a massive bomb and don't give up. You need to rally and and and make your voices heard. That's the only way that the government will listen, apparently. I would be calling and knocking on their doors every single day until they heard what I had to say about it. It needs to change, it needs to be better, they need to increase the funding.

What do you see as the difference between a needs-based budget, and a balanced budget?

A balanced budget is what the government wants, right? A needs based is what the schools truly need. They need more operating funds, they need more resources, they need more teachers, more support staff. A balanced budget is what the government wants, they provide you with an amount of money and it's the same pie that they give you every year and they expect you to, you know, just cut it in different ways but the pie never grows.

10. How can trustees ensure that the leadership in Surrey schools reflects the diversity of Surrey's communities?

At the elementary school level it would be our PACs...they should be reaching out to our PACs, PACs are so full of knowledge, knowledge that is not being tapped into.

Shawn Wilson

1. What is your key, or main, motivation to run for a school trustee position?

Originally when I ran 18 years ago, I had retired and I had quite a bit of time on my hands so I volunteered for a while, then I wanted to do something a little more substantial. I had my expertise in business, and I thought school board would be nice because I didn't want to be in a full-time job. But the bigger reason, I really like how schools play a part in developing children and society in general it's a huge part of our world. So I thought it would be exciting to govern a system that provided this education. I like the fact that parents need a voice in public education, and I'm quite willing to give them that voice.

2. How do you see the role of the school trustees in addressing the issues with space, overcrowded classrooms, and new school construction in this rapidly growing district?

The role would be to strongly advocate to the Ministry of Education the need for brick/mortar space, to reduce the need for portables. It is a cumbersome process to get new schools approved then built, it's taking so long and the rate of increase in population - the two lines don't converge very well. Advocacy with ministry is the key element; you have to keep pressing them. We've now become a school system of portables. We need to press upon the city for them to understand in a greater degree, how not just 1 development in 1 area has an impact on school space issues, but how an accumulation of developments within that zone, so we need to pressure local government hard on this. Development is part of the problem, yet the school board deals with the brunt of the problem, but I wouldn't want to drive a wedge in our relationship with the city government. I've met with Mayor Heppner a number of times, but I'm not really a troublemaker, don't want to create trouble if it's not necessary.

3. Currently, Surrey is short of classroom teachers and teachers teaching on call. What ideas do you have for recruitment and retention?

The memorandum has come down and it's obviously created a much greater need, and we have a transition time to deal with recruitment. What I'd like to see done, and I'll actively promote this, is we need to give experience credit to other district TOCs. What are the other districts doing? What can we do? Can we compete with that? I think we have to maybe look at hiring HR staff that deals directly with recruitment. I don't see a risk of creating a job that won't be necessary in 2 years. But with the way Surrey's growing it would be a kind of forever position.

4. Surrey Schools are still short of Learning Support Teachers. How will you advocate fully implementing the language in the collective agreement so that Surrey students will have enough specialist teachers to meet their learning needs?

I think I would have to advocate for funding to fully restore the historical levels of LST. I think we need new money for that. It should not come at the expense of other teaching positions. I was on the board in 2001 when we switched to the Learning Support model. There are lots of benefits to it, service can be provided to a wide range of kids. Now that's it's restored, I would like to see the best of both the previous contract language and the LST model.

5. In bargaining for a new contract, what actions will you take to ensure that BCPSEA and the Provincial government will reach a fairly negotiated contract with teachers?

One of our members is currently a Director for BCPSEA, [and] if he was reelected, I would support him in that. Surrey board would have a fairly good voice in that way. I would support a respectful process with him in bargaining, and do everything we can to avoid job action. Nobody wins in job action. You don't, the students don't. What I would do would be to look deeply into how other jurisdictions compensate teachers and that would be the minimum that I would accept for our teachers. Weigh it all out, why can't we be at the top of the compensation level?

6. What is the best way for the Board to hear from and respond to concerns from parents, employees and other community members?

Ok well, well I would continue to be available like I've always been and responsive to phone calls. I don't [get] very many phone calls, but I do get quite a few emails, and I'm fairly good at being responsive to people. Support the community forums that we've held, always been very useful.

Liaison meetings should continue with CUPE, STA, DPAC etc.

7. How can the Board support the recommendations and calls to action of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission?

I'm a firm believer that schools have to have as part of the curriculum a clear study of the history, of not just residential schools, but treatment of aboriginals and native peoples that were here before we were. Education is the key to resolving the distrust that aboriginal people have for society in general. I'm happy to say that we're doing it, but it's kind of piecemeal for my liking, I would try to ramp it up more. It's a big problem, not easy to resolve but through respect/education we can do it.

8. As school trustee, how will you use your role to support the sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender identity development of Surrey students?

I have no problem with the SOGI 123 resource. I have a problem with how some people misunderstand, and I wouldn't be worthy of election if I couldn't respect diversity

I looked at resource, some people are just ignoring reality; they just don't get it. I've always stood for the belief that you can't change societal norms unless you teach young children the need for the change; can't do it when they're 20, that's too late. I've spent time talking to people about their fears that SOGI is about promoting deviant sexual behaviour, and all that is complete nonsense. Have to fight back against people who have that mentality. SOGI 123 is a good resource.

9. As school trustee how will you actively advocate for a better funded public education system?

I would be on the minister's doorstep as often as I could. I think they listen when they hear the same message over and over. When the public is informed, we can demonstrate clearly that special needs education isn't properly funded. I think it helps when you can get the public to understand, and pressure comes from both sides. We need to continuously advocate for proper funding.

What do you see as the difference between a needs-based budget, and a balanced budget?

There's no way that I would support a needs-based budget. It won't happen with me as a trustee. you must follow the law.

10. How can trustees ensure that the leadership in Surrey schools reflects the diversity of Surrey's communities?

I would continue to do what we're currently doing, because we have no barriers to people that apply to leadership positions. I'm very proud of the fact that we actually have more women in leadership than we do men. For women, and for aboriginal people, and immigrants (indian & chinese) all applying for jobs as teachers and leadership roles.

Sonia Andhi

1. What is your key, or main, motivation to run for a school trustee position?

I want to be trustee because things really need to change. I am a social worker and family counsellor. Way too many kids are falling through the cracks, as well as teachers and support workers are also suffering. I've been a community organizer and activist for the last 30 years but I just felt I needed to take my work to a bigger platform where I can have a bigger impact on kids and the teachers. I care about the schools, that is the base, that is the foundation, and if our kids are not getting the foundation, what are we doing? Our society is doomed.

2. How do you see the role of the school trustees in addressing the issues with space, overcrowded classrooms, and new school construction in this rapidly growing district?

Trustees are the ones who are managing the budgets, and looking at the needs of the schools and the students. I wanted to get involved and run because the [current] school board seems disengaged and uninvolved. The school board needs to look at developments coming up, and ensuring there are enough schools to provide for the kids. How many developments have been approved, and how will the needs of the kids provided for? What about basement suites where families are living, is there room for them in the schools?

3. Currently, Surrey is short of classroom teachers and teachers teaching on call. What ideas do you have for recruitment and retention?

Back home one of the things that would happen ... was they would have housing for teachers. Was it subsidised or was it like a hostel etc., I'm not sure, but can we create something like that? People tell me their friend is a teacher but they moved away because it is too expensive, but that is my out-of-the box idea, provide housing for teachers.

Also, why are BC teachers the lowest paid in Canada? We need to recruit good, effective teachers who will stay, and "doing it because it makes a difference" only goes so far, we need to pay people properly, what they deserve, so I would advocate for that equity with other teachers, and look for that balance.

Teachers need more social support, and even for the older ones, how do we support them as well, it is even harder for them to ask for that support. Keeping up with curriculum change, etc., it is stressful. For me it is about talking to the affected people, I am big on collaboration, engagement, asking them "what would work for you."

4. Surrey Schools are still short of Learning Support Teachers. How will you advocate fully implementing the language in the collective agreement so that Surrey students will have enough specialist teachers to meet their learning needs?

I would make sure that these issues are on the agenda. We need to talk about these issues and have concrete plans around them. We have to go after that, in terms of what is the plan.

5. In bargaining for a new contract, what actions will you take to ensure that BCPSEA and the Provincial government will reach a fairly negotiated contract with teachers?

I am hopeful that things are not as adversarial as they were for the last 16 years, hopefully the board's task is a little easier than those days. I am not only there for the students, I am also there for the teachers, so we have to support them first and foremost.

I am for the workers rights and advocating for them, let's come to the table and negotiate for fairness.

6. What is the best way for the Board to hear from and respond to concerns from parents, employees and other community members?

The board meetings need space for listening and responding. Parents and groups want to be heard. Not everything can be fixed, but they want to feel heard. They need to know trustees are listening and that they care.

It doesn't have to only be at parent meetings, could be focus groups, drop-ins, meetings at schools, have a trustee meeting night, and have action plans attached to that.

Social media is big, there are limitations, I can't over promise and under deliver, but I really believe in being more engaged

7. How can the Board support the recommendations and calls to action of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission?

I think we have to engage more indigenous voices, not just say those words. I work with quite a few indigenous families, there are barriers for them to access the school system. It needs to be [improved] from their cultural point of view. We have to not be their voices, but give them the ability to speak up and be involved. [When it comes to] institutions, [there is a lot of] the fear and apprehension. I have been consulting with a lot of agencies that are involved, FRAFCA, Metis family workers, for example report that people just react badly to the reception they received in schools. There needs to be a lot more education, [of service providers] and that has to be meaningful.

8. As school trustee, how will you use your role to support the sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender identity development of Surrey students?

I would support it by ensuring that the resources out there are being used. I would encourage that. We need some discussions and collaborations about how the teachers are handling it, how are biases and beliefs coming up. For example in the Muslim community [some] are saying they don't want SOGI, I point out that this is also about discrimination, and how that is affecting children. This is not about converting anyone, I don't think any books have [ever] converted anyone!

9. As school trustee how will you actively advocate for a better funded public education system?

I am hopeful for a good team to be elected this time, that we don't have status quo.

Workers need to be supported, or the system will crumble. We need the funds and the resources, it is not OK for teachers to be spending out of their pockets, it is not acceptable. Also the PAC fundraising , not acceptable.

I have been attending the "wake up Surrey" events, and hear lots of groups asking for money, but then I see gala events of Indian stars being flown in, that is unacceptable. So there is money, just not directed to help people!

What do you see as the difference between a needs-based budget, and a balanced budget?

As school boards we have to try to ensure we have balanced budgets, or we can be fired, but we need to look at the needs as well, It is a tough task, but it is good to go in with fresh eyes.

10. How can trustees ensure that the leadership in Surrey schools reflects the diversity of Surrey's communities?

People need to see there is someone there who understands their needs, I bring that lived experience as an immigrant. Also, in some ways we need to challenge old fashioned notions, for example ingrained sexism in any culture can be challenged. It is important to have the voices so we can challenge some of the notions. We can't walk on eggshells worrying that we might offend some people. We need diversity in terms of loud voices, and not just tokenism. Re: principals and district staff. How are we recruiting from different cultures? Perhaps we can actually add extra points for skills they are bringing, we need to be more vocal and transparent about the value of language and cultural skills.

Terry Allan

1. What is your key, or main, motivation to run for a school trustee position?

I don't think it has changed since I ran 16 years ago, it is my belief is to provide the best possible public education system for the kids of Surrey. One of my main concerns was my desire to protect public sector workers. Budgets were tight and layoffs were common across the board. It was my hope that my presence on the board would protect public sector jobs, CUPE and STA. The more teachers you can protect the better education is provided.

2. How do you see the role of the school trustees in addressing the issues with space, overcrowded classrooms, and new school construction in this rapidly growing district?

We need to change the focus, I made it clear in the past 2 months that we need to pressure the government into understanding we need to build schools based on predicted enrollment, long before they arrive. Our predictions have been within 1%, and we need to pressure the government on the need to build new schools. We need to move away from the 110% capacity within the region before we look at building schools.

3. Currently, Surrey is short of classroom teachers and teachers teaching on call. What ideas do you have for recruitment and retention?

I think the phenomenon as a result of your victory in the Supreme Court - we need to make sure the playing field is level throughout the province. Surrey is the most affordable place to live. We need to work with our HR organization. The leaves of absence here are not the same as other locals. We need to insist that changes are made. Before I talked to Matt, I didn't understand it. I think those need to be changed. I think we need to find as many teachers as we can. George Abbott asked universities to stop training so many teachers, and we need them now. We need to look at the Collective Agreement, look at make it a better place to work in Surrey. If there are issues that impede people coming, then those are the things we need to change.

4. Surrey Schools are still short of Learning Support Teachers. How will you advocate fully implementing the language in the collective agreement so that Surrey students will have enough specialist teachers to meet their learning needs?

I think we have to advocate for the teachers' original position (that we were short 350 positions); that needs to be carried strongly forward to BCPSEA. That is how we can move forward on all of this. It is important for those who represent the teachers to clearly communicate where the shortfalls are. Around LST teachers, the board needs to know that, and the whole board can then apply the pressure to BCPSEA to rectify the wrongs, or the pieces that haven't been fixed under the MOA.

5. In bargaining for a new contract, what actions will you take to ensure that BCPSEA and the Provincial government will reach a fairly negotiated contract with teachers?

Part of the problem for anyone in public sector unions, as far as the government is concerned you will get 2%, as all public sectors. So how will you get an agreement that meets the needs? I hope by the end that all the issues around the victory are dealt with. I also hope that we can look at any money available for additions to the CA are spent how teachers want it spent. I think the teachers' needs must be met in bargaining. If all the issues are dealt with in this round, in this 3 yr term, after that we can look at how teachers in BC are not being dealt with fairly compared to Alberta, Ontario, I hope the money goes where it should go to teachers' salaries. I'm serious, in every other sector, these inequities are met, but I've not heard anyone say we should meet the inequities in teachers' salaries. It can be done.

6. What is the best way for the Board to hear from and respond to concerns from parents, employees and other community members?

I think we need to have more liaison meeting with teachers, more frank discussions, there isn't enough time for CUPE or the STA to make their cases when we have them only once per year. We need to structure liaison meetings so that they can tell us what they truly want. The board will get to where you want to go, believe us. We try to meet with parents as well, but it is hard for them to understand the issues. I think there needs to be more meetings, perhaps

quarterly. If we did that, teachers wouldn't be in the position to try to cover all the issues in one meeting. They could cut to the chase, we can get to where we need to be.

7. How can the Board support the recommendations and calls to action of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission?

I think reconciliation is critical. Our First Nations have been dealt with absolutely appalling. We have to support the Ab Ed section, we need to supply them with whatever resources and support they need. As an educational organization, we can't not meet those needs. We need to provide the resources, and then we can actually deal with the fact about whether we are providing the appropriate education, and improve graduation levels.

8. As school trustee, how will you use your role to support the sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender identity development of Surrey students?

I strongly support SOGI, a little bit like reconciliation so many things can fall through the cracks if not dealt with up front. We need to provide resources, support the teachers going down that road, and we need to totally ignore the naysayers, we need to continue down the path of doing it. There will be some teachers who don't support it, but I think the board has it right to support it. We do need to be cautious, I believe the Surrey board is in the right, and we will continue down that path. There are too many nutcases out there anyways. I wouldn't run very well in Chilliwack!

9. As school trustee how will you actively advocate for a better funded public education system?

I think you have to realize that it doesn't matter what the government of the day is, I think you have to continue to let them know that Public Education is as underfunded as it was under the liberals, and the socreds, and we need to continue to put forward that message. I found out today that exempt staff will get the same raise as the teachers, and the cost of that will come out of existing budgets. You just can't stop pointing this out. I have been accused of being divisive, about the fact they are doing the funding formula review. The gov of the day has said there will be no new funding. If you take out one dollar, (per child) that's \$73,000. My job is to advocate for the funding of Surrey. The government has to be embarrassed to bring about change.

What do you see as the difference between a needs-based budget, and a balanced budget?

The problem is you can put needs budgets in all you want, but by law we have to put in a balanced budget. We are better off putting in a balanced budget. A needs budget is like a fairy tale. You could put in both. When I was forced to cut \$11M, and to do that openly. With our enrollment, there is no need to put in a needs budget.

10. How can trustees ensure that the leadership in Surrey schools reflects the diversity of Surrey's communities?

I think we have to be very clear with the leadership as to where you see the district going and the make-up of the district. Whether people like it or not, we are the bosses. We have to be brave enough to say, this is not where we need to go. If we need more emphasis on South Asian or French Immersion, we can't be sitting in awe of our leadership, and I think 20 years ago that was how lots of the problems were created. Sometimes we have to just be able to say, I don't like it. If we don't do that, as educators they always think they know better than everyone else, but as a trustee you have to be able to say, wait, that's not right, or that's not where the board to go. We need to take the time to think about who we are representing, and what we are representing. It takes brave people to do that.