

## Questions for Candidates

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*The following list provides a menu of questions your local can use when drafting questionnaires for trustee candidates and when preparing for all candidates' meetings.*

*Locals should identify additional issues that may apply more directly to their local situation or members' needs.*

### 1. Why is public education important to you?

I was born and raised in Italy and Malta, public education, from nursery school to university, is publicly funded and free.

From my immigrant family experience, the poverty alleviation development work I do in my local neighbourhood, and many years of labour force adjustment work, I am very committed to public education, continuous learning, training and skill development.

There are a multitude of reasons why education is important, I can list the health [social determinants of health], household, and the economic benefits to our community and broader economy.

Overarching all of the benefits and outcomes, is that publicly funded education is the bridge to all of these opportunities.

### 2. What is motivating you to run for the position of school trustee?

The key words that immediately come to mind are children, youth, adults, poverty, equity, access to opportunities, balance in the education system between rural urban and have and have not.

As a parent, community volunteer and a current school board Trustee, my focus has always been on our children and youth. I want to put my energies toward building a system that ensures there are many opportunities for youth to be successful.

### 3. What in your background qualifies you to be a school trustee?

My background includes a wide array of work, education and volunteer experiences, from things such as working with At Risk Youth, Adult Literacy and ESL in the Wellington Board to childcare and recreation programs, employment and training, workplace education and workforce adjustment programs locally, provincially and through national sector councils. I am also a parent whose children

were/are educated by the Upper Grand District School Board, I have been a hands-on parent volunteer and engaged in School Councils, ARCs and breakfast and lunch programs.

Most importantly I bring board operations experience. This is important as a Trustee sets the vision for the board and develops the system to support teachers, and our school operations as they educate our young people. I have many years of school board, Ontario Public School Board Association [OPSBA] and other local/provincial board experience with budgets, strategic planning and governance.

I bring system experience with a focus on development, action and change as an outcome.

#### **4. What knowledge do you have of what today's classrooms are like? Have you been in a classroom recently?**

Yes, I am regularly in a classroom, as an active Trustee but also as a parent. I receive classroom and school communication, newsletters and app updates, I attend school events, parent meetings, open houses, and kindergarten bus orientation to list some examples.

#### **5. Are you prepared to send a strong message to Queen's Park about any negative impact of provincial education policies?**

Yes. Trustees currently raise concerns at the Board table and through board motions authorize the Chair to send letters to the government, other schools boards and the School Board Trustee Associations.

In addition, through the Board Advisory Committees, local and provincial issues are discussed and brought forward to the Board as recommendations for action.

#### **6. What is your position on the new Ford government's decision to repeal the sexual health component of the 2015 Health and Physical Education Curriculum? As a school trustee, would you advocate for retaining the updated curriculum and not reverting to the 2008 version of the document?**

The 2010 curriculum still contains key issues of on-line safety, bullying, consent, respect and honour of diverse families of students who may identify as LGBTQ. All of this is part of the 2010 curriculum in some way. The H&PE curriculum is one of many subjects taught in the elementary panel.

As a school board we are required to use the curriculum provided by the provincial government; to deliver it in our classrooms and use it as the basis of student assessments.

I support teachers who serve all students drawing on local resources to make learning connections in our various school communities. As a current member of the Upper Grand District School Board, we expressed our concern to the government and shared our position with parents and staff [please see below]. It is my hope, under the leadership of the new board of trustees, that there will be continued participation and local leadership in the Education Consultation. It is also important for the Upper Grand to work with parents across our jurisdiction and all trustee representatives, finding common ground across many views, and building relationships and a strong voice for education.

Please see the Board's open letter to our community, parents and staff.

<https://www.ugdsb.ca/blog/an-open-letter-from-the-ugdsb-regarding-the-health-and-physical-education-curriculum/>

**7. Do you agree elementary students are being short-changed by education funding levels? If elected, would you lobby the provincial government to increase funding levels for elementary education?**

My experience, at the OPSBA and our local Upper Grand table, has been that the education funding formula has been a long time topic of concern with all provincial governments. As a sector we never seem to have enough to do what we would like to do for our children and local school board system.

I have reviewed the 2017 “Shortchanging Ontario Students: An overview and Assessment of Education Funding in Ontario” and thank ETFO for the comprehensive work reflected in this document.

I am aware that there is a difference between secondary school per pupil funding and elementary, also adult education, day student, night student, summer students in our broader system. I am also aware that our school funding does not support smaller schools, which in our case are located in our rural communities.

As a locally elected Trustee and one member of the Board it is our responsibility to take the allocation from the provincial government and ensure that, at the local level [all of Wellington and Dufferin], we are meeting our statutory and contractual commitments and providing the best possible education for all children and youth.

**8. If elected, would you work to ensure that grants designated for elementary education are expended *only* on elementary students and programs?**

I am not in support of “sweater-ing” grants. Public Education needs leaders whom you can trust to make the decisions that put our children, and the system that supports our children’s learning, at the centre of our decisions. That is a commitment that I bring now and have always brought to our budget and decision-making processes.

The Upper Grand does not use classroom funding to fund our business operations, quite the opposite!

I am concerned that sweater-ing funding will alienate and fragment education partners and stakeholders, that this will create winners and losers, and that this will not be good for all children and youth.

**9. Do you agree that elementary schools should have the benefit of teacher-librarians as well as music, art, physical education and guidance specialists?**

While this is a personal value and belief, the provincial funding does not recognize or fund specialist teachers. It is my understanding that specialist teachers are not recognized until secondary grade 10 level credits, which then has some related provincial funding.

In addition to funding for teachers, from my experience on several building committees, there is no funding for specialist rooms, art, music, tech, or stages in elementary school capital grants.

**10. If elected, would you commit to respecting the collective agreement provisions related to supervision time in local elementary schools and to ensuring that the supervision limits are clearly understood by school administrators?**

Yes, I firmly support the need for our administrators to understand and respect collective agreements and the operationalization of the agreements in their schools.

**11. Do you believe, as part of free collective bargaining, that teachers should have the right to strike?**

Yes.

**12. Do you believe in the importance of lowering class sizes? What would you do as a school trustee to advocate for lower class sizes particularly in Kindergarten and the Junior and Intermediate grades?**

I support smaller classes where possible. The government hard class size cap has proven challenging where there is a lack of space in schools to create additional classes. Class size is tied to the central bargaining table and so as a local school board we will respectfully implement the agreements.

**13. Do you support the call for a more rigorous focus on health and safety issues in elementary schools?**

Health and safety as a whole is a focus of the Upper Grand system-wide. The board conducts regular visits and inspections and is thorough in following up with staff to ensure that training is up to date on an annual basis.

**14. If elected, will you lobby the provincial government to increase the grants provided for school boards to hire teaching assistants and professional support personnel who play key roles in supporting students with special needs?**

Stable and sufficient funding for staff to support our most vulnerable students, is of great concern. Special education funding has been an OPSBA priority for many years, and while some progress was made with the previous government, I am concerned that these gains have not been sustained. While changes to funding can be expected my hope would be that the current supports would remain until a new model is developed.

**15. Describe your understanding of the extent and nature of classroom violence in Ontario schools.**

My understanding is that this is a balance of the Rights of the Child to an education, and the Rights of the other students and teacher/ staff for a safe learning and workplace. I hope that we are able to successfully balance these two Rights in an effort to be inclusive in our classrooms and schools and ensure the safety of students and staff.

**16. What is your position on corporate involvement in public education? What role should school fundraising play in supporting schools?**

I feel old when I reflect that a ruler, eraser, notebook and pencil crayons were provided to students when I attended public school. That was a long time ago.

As a leader in my neighbourhood, one of the four poverty priority neighbourhoods in the city of Guelph, I along with others, raise funds and provide supports for families sending their children to school each year, such as back to school supplies, hair cuts and clothing. It is expensive to raise children and send them to school.

I believe that any corporate support should be directed through the UG Learning Foundation and should be used to ensure equity for our youth in opportunities for learning and success. I am concerned about creating “have” and “have not” schools based on their ability to engage parents and fundraise.

### **17. Do you support funding private schools?**

No. I do not believe in charter schools nor funding of private schools, whether they deliver the public education curriculum or not.

I believe that we have an excellent public education system and rather than using public dollars to fragment students, I would like to see additional resources and supports to ensure that our schools are places that welcome diversity and that reflect our communities that we wish our youth to lead in, and be successful in.

### **18. Are you committed to ensuring the principles in the regulation that governs teacher hiring are reflected in your school board's hiring process?**

I do not support the government imposed Regulation 247. The Upper Grand has a long history of respectful and positive labour relations and did not have the issues that were at the root of the problem that caused the broad sweeping imposition of the Regulation. I do support the principles of fair hiring.

The Regulation has negative effects on the board's ability to work toward a system that reflects the diversity of our communities; it also ties our hands in providing employment opportunities for experienced teachers who relocate to our communities.

It has been my experience that the Upper Grand has always followed the spirit of the Regulation as a best practice, worked alongside and cooperatively with the ETFO leadership to best meet the needs of children, schools and our communities.

### **19. What suggestions do you have for increasing parental and public support for public schools?**

I am deeply concerned with the lack of awareness and support for public education in the broader public and the growing disdain for public service employees.

I have always believed in growing a movement, a "parade", of public support and ambassadors for education and our public services. In the Upper Grand I hope that we will be able to continue with the regional meetings that were introduced as part of the Long Term Accommodation Planning process. This would be an opportunity to raise awareness and knowledge of local education issues and to build regional support for our schools and board as a whole.