



SD 61 TRUSTEE CANDIDATE SURVEY 2011 Municipal Elections

CANDIDATE NAME:
Rob Paynter

1. Do you support a fully funded budget that meets the needs of all students? (a 'needs' budget)

YES

2. Will you vote to submit only a fully funded 'needs' budget to the Minister of Education?

YES

3. How will you vote when the Superintendent's Report on Class Size and Composition is in violation of Bill 33?

REJECT

4. Some districts send the Superintendent back to use surplus funds to improve class size and composition. Will you vote to send the Superintendent back to produce a revised report that uses surplus funds to improve class size and composition?

YES

5. What is your position on Foundational Skills Assessment (FSA) testing?

SUPPORT I'm always interested in data to measure trends over time, etc. I don't think that FSA testing can be used with any confidence to evaluate teaching effectiveness between schools but I do see at the macro level there being utility in using standardized evaluation as a means to assess the effectiveness of changes to curriculum or pedagogy. My biggest concern is the blatant misuse of the data by the Fraser Institute, *et al* to justify their indefensible positions on private school superiority and/or other claims. I would be willing to see some safeguards enacted to limit school level data for this reason – for example

6. How will you engage and improve parental and citizen participation in public education issues?

Comments

- I will work for a return to the formation of ad hoc subject driven committees that invite the participation of all school community members – for example strategic planning (rather than Stantec), special ed, etc
- I would proactively visit any schools that I am assigned to as a trustee with the goal of meeting with PACs, teachers, administrators, staff and students, take plenty of notes and provide answers on the spot or after additional research, as required.
- I will maintain my current website (www.robpaynter.ca) to provide a blog style update of board activities. I would push to have trustee websites/blogs linked to the District website for ease of location.
- I would investigate options related to a trustee blog tied to the Times Colonist, Monday Magazine, Focus or some other publication
- I think trustees should have blackberries/smartphones tied to email addresses posted on the District website to ensure that we can be easily accessed by interested parents and other parties.
- I would like to see a complete redesign of the current district website to make it more user friendly.
- I would push for the posting of the district budget on the school board website down to line items for individual schools.
- I would like to see all contracts above a certain dollar value posted for public tender
- I would like to see meeting agendas and draft minutes from the previous meeting posted to the web a minimum of one week prior to meetings and include all supporting documentation – reports to be tabled, presentations, etc. so that parents and citizens can arrive at Board meetings ready to engage in an informed manner. Further this information should be pushed to PACs and other school community bodies.
- I would limit any *in camera* meetings of the Board to strictly those issues that must be treated in confidence (personnel matters) or where disclosure would run a clear financial risk for the Board.
- I would like to see specific policies tabled to provide guidance for PACD/district engagement – specific motivation is PAC fundraising for playground equipment and being charged unsubstantiated and frequently exorbitant amounts for installation.
- I would like to open motions under debate to comments from the audience at Board meetings (some practical limits may be needed here) to avoid the current situation where parent and citizen presentations are undertaken at the start of the meeting rather than within the context of the issue under debate.

- I would like to see the hiring processes for senior administrators (Superintendents and Secretary-Treasurer at a minimum) to be undertaken at the conclusion of every term (incumbents obliged to reapply and compete) and that a public hearing component be a part of the process, during which candidates may be asked opinions, perspectives, background information, etc. by trustees and members of the public.
- Expense payments of all trustees and senior administrators must be available for public examination.
- I would like to see meeting minutes expanded to compare at a bare minimum with minutes found at our local city councils (all public input summarized, content of trustee discussion recorded).
- Voting records for all trustees should be posted as a standalone document accessible directly from the main website, rather than being buried in the content of meeting minutes.

There are other points I'm forgetting but I hope that this will offer a reasonable start at winning back the public trust.

7. Will you accept invitations to go visit a classroom regarding specific problems?

YES I actually plan on seeking invitations to visit classrooms across the district.

8. If you are an incumbent trustee have you ever been invited to visit a classroom regarding specific problems?

N/A

I do check in with my kids teachers on a regular basis and have been in their classrooms in the past. I think the experience was very helpful in providing me with both a context and clarification of some issues I didn't quite have my head around.

9. Do you think that special education is adequately funded?

NO

If "NO", what should change?

The funding formula must be changed to provide for adequate resources to not only ensure that necessary assessments are undertaken as required within a set timeline but that in class resources – EAs, etc are funded for the entire period that children require the assistance (i.e. 30 hours per week, not part time).

I also feel that the discussion of Special Ed is a bit of a red herring. Teachers must be supported in such a manner that they can deliver properly supported learning opportunities to all students. When students requiring additional support are left without support, it impacts the entire class, not the LD children alone. I believe that this goes for the particularly gifted students who we can lose to education as easily as those requiring additional learning support if we do not provide appropriate consideration for their unique capabilities.

I also believe that the Education Ministry should be working more closely with other ministries to facilitate a more efficient and responsive delivery of services (i.e. MCFD, Social Development, etc)

10. What should be done with the current District Strategic Faculties Plan? (Stantec Report)

SCRAP THE REPORT

I expect that there are likely some elements of the document that can be used as a point of departure in the creation of a community based strategic plan. I would like to see a subcommittee established with a long term mandate to develop and maintain the plan into the future as well as identify key indicators, track and report on these indicators and recommend plan modifications as necessary in an iterative fashion.

I would also like to take advantage of the teachable moment offered by the Stantec report experience and ensure that key staff are adequately trained and guidance policy is established to ensure that contracts for strategic plans and related initiatives are developed in conjunction with trustees (particularly with regard to methods for public and trustee consultation), that clear deliverables as well as delivery schedules are identified along with penalties for late delivery or non-completion. The roles of expense authority and qualified receiver must be confirmed with staff and in the case of reports to the Board, products should not be accepted for payment until after the report has been submitted to the Board for review.

11. How many hours per month will you commit to the role of Trustee including meetings?

26-30 hours

12. What are your thoughts and comment's on user fees that parents pay for, such as academies, sports equipment, math workbooks, technical equipment, planners?

From a theoretical perspective and as a target to work towards I would like to see a situation where fees are not required for any of these items/opportunities. In the absence of access to the district budget I am unable to determine the feasibility of such a scenario but based on the input from others who are more knowledgeable about this topic my priority for now would be on the resources that are necessary for classroom learning. Where fees are sought from parents I believe that there must always be a needs test established to ensure that a lack of financial resources will never be a barrier to students – this includes access to academies.

I believe that the investments we make into our public education system are among the most cost effective allocations that any level of government can make. While less popular because they often fail to deliver headline making results within the standard election cycle I believe that judicious support for a range of different initiatives and opportunities within our school

system can positively influence many current social inequities, support economic growth in a manner that oil pipelines cannot and avoid other undesirable outcomes including the need to construct, staff and fill new prisons.

13. What is your experience in parliamentary procedure and committee work?

My formative years in the military did not lend themselves to expertise in decision via committee. However as a very green junior officer I learned a valuable lesson that I still attempt to live by: being the decision maker does not make you're the expert; consult freely with anyone who has something to offer, consider all input and when you make a decision, offer recognition to those who provided you with the good ideas in the first place.

My second career as a provincial land use planner has, over the past 15 years, given me no end of opportunities to work within committee structures. The composition of these committees and my role within them has ranged considerably from note taker to participant to technical support to chair. In my experience the committees that deliver the most effective and durable recommendations are the ones that approach tasks collaboratively; where rank and alignment (to corporations, ministries, First Nations, interest groups or sectors) are not a factor in weighing the merits of suggestions and where external influences drive the range of possible outcomes.

While I have been engaged in formal parliamentary style processes in the past I claim no great expertise. I will commit to signing up for the first available course on Roberts Rules that the BC School Trustees Association offers should I be successful in my bid for a position as trustee.

14. Do you live in the SD 61 boundaries?

YES

15. If you have children, what type of schools do they or have they attended?

PUBLIC both are currently in elementary school in the district.

16. What methods would you use to provide accountability & transparency?

I believe that I have already touched on a number of points in question 6 that might also address this question. To add to that I would include a basic principle that anything that should be available through FOIPPA should be provided freely within a matter of days. I believe that any deliberate attempt to deny, or delay unnecessarily, access to information that should be public accessible should automatically result in career counseling and administrative action with subsequent actions being grounds for dismissal

17. Would vote for a motion to have all votes recorded and published annually?

YES I would actually prefer to table or second such a motion before voting on it.

18. How else would you inform the public about your positions and actions on issues?

Again I don't want to belabour this process by restating my earlier comments. My goal here would be to answer any question to the best of my abilities and within the limits of confidentiality and then to provide that information publicly in case anyone else has a similar question or interest.

19. Do you support Kindergarten/Grade 1 split classes?

NO

From observing my own kids in both K and Grade 1 it is my feeling that the goals and approaches at these two levels do not support integration. Kindergarten is still very much a formative learn through play environment whereas grade 1 represents a transition to a more "traditional" classroom environment and instructional approach. I also believe that child development varies considerably through the ages of 4/5 to 6/7 and that this may also be a challenge to address within a single classroom environment. By the same token, if someone wanted to explore addressing Grade 1 curriculum and beyond in a creative and play based manner, then I would be all ears.

20. What are your thoughts on the involvement of private corporations in the public education system?

I have witnessed the introduction of corporate delivery of various services within my current workplace, and speaking strictly as an end user, it is tough to identify what, if any, benefits there have been in entering to single source contract delivery models. The opportunity to realize cost saving through long term agreements appear to include other unstated costs in terms of inflexible, declining service/support over time and the inability to respond nimbly to advances in technology or the marketplace. There may be cost savings in terms of establishing favourable corporate sales agreements where the leverage of market access to the district (or districts) may result in reduced purchasing costs relative to individual or small lot sales but such agreements should not be tied to single source or term purchase commitments.

With regard to corporations offering favourable agreements for delivery of infrastructure or other support elements (here I'm thinking wi-fi although my treatment is still conceptual) I believe that the basic principle should be caveat emptor. Few individuals and far fewer private corporations give away anything for nothing so it behooves administrators and trustees to consider all angles in these situations. I believe that this should extend even to the issue of exposing students to, and through the institution of public education, effectively

recommending corporate identities to students is a path to be trod with trepidation.

21. Please tell us anything else you think may be important or relevant to your candidacy for School Trustee in SD 61.

While I still find the experience more than a little surreal (when did any of us ever envision spending our evenings mapping out where to put signs with our names and images?) I am very grateful for the opportunity that the campaign has given me to identify concerns that I have with our current public education system. Although I like to think that I am open to all perspectives, I must admit that I don't always think of ever perspective on my own. Engaging with people, whether on the sidewalk outside public schools, or in coffee shops or all candidate meetings has given me so many opportunities to learn new facts, understand different perspectives and re-evaluate my own views on issue I thought were simple and straightforward.

To those of you reading this, thank you very much for giving up your time and making the effort to inform yourself about what is an all too low profile local government election. Whoever you do choose to support I encourage each of you to not only vote but find someone else to bring along to the polling station. There's no way any candidate should feel positive about a mandate that is based on only one in five eligible voters in the district.

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