

Delta School Trustee Candidate Responses

Name: Gurinder Kahlon

1. Why do you want to be a school trustee? What do you understand the role of a trustee to be?

I care deeply about public education and its direct impact on the future of Delta. As a father with young children in our local school system and a candidate with the One Delta team, my motivation comes down to three things: students, people, and responsible governance. I want every student in Delta to graduate with confidence, strong foundational skills, and clear pathways to future success. Through my professional background, I've learned that organizations thrive when leadership listens first and supports the people on the front lines. Support staff, teachers, and administrators are critical to student achievement. I am running to bring a collaborative, accountable approach to the Board, working directly with CUPE, the DTA, parents, and community members to protect public education while ensuring sensible stewardship of taxpayer dollars.

2. Delta staff are committed to including all children and families. How will you support Delta staff in creating inclusive school communities?

It's important for every student to feel safe, respected, and like they truly belong at school. Inclusion is woven into the everyday conversations we have at our schools, and CUPE members like EAs, CYC workers, custodians, and administrative staff are key to those conversations. I'm committed to supporting our support staff by: Listening closely to those on the front lines to spot any physical, cultural, or resource challenges students might be encountering. Making sure staff have the right resources, mental health support, and specialized training to help students with the growing complexities they face. Backing up district-wide efforts to ensure everyone feels safe, respected, and valued, from students to staff.

3. Delta staff are learning about decolonization and reconciliation. How will you support Delta staff in our supportive role?

I see my role as supportive and collaborative, focusing on ensuring our district has the vision and resources to build on the good work already underway. This includes supporting continuous learning by facilitating ongoing professional development, which empowers educators to confidently integrate Indigenous perspectives into everyday learning and land-based activities. Additionally, I am committed to resourcing the shift by ensuring adequate funding and support as the district transitions toward a more distributed and decolonized approach. My efforts are guided by the community, as I prioritize respecting and listening to the voices of Indigenous students,

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families, the Tsawwassen First Nation, and the Musqueam Indian Band to inform and guide our progress.

4. Due to underfunding in the system, violence has become more prevalent. How will you commit to providing a safe and healthy working and learning environment for students and staff?

Safety has to include both students and staff. When schools are under-resourced and understaffed, the pressure increases on everyone, and that can make difficult situations harder to manage. As a trustee, I would support better staffing and resources, clear processes for reporting safety concerns, and timely follow-up when incidents occur. We also need to focus on prevention and early intervention, including proper training and support for teachers, EAs, counsellors, CYC workers and administrators. I would also support looking at patterns of incidents across schools so we can address underlying issues rather than treating every situation separately. Re-establishing a Health and Wellness Committee could also keep staff well-being and workplace safety on the Board's agenda. A well-staffed school is a safer school. When there are enough people and the right supports in place, we create a safer and healthier environment for everyone.

5. How would you propose to alleviate the current EA staffing shortage and improve recruitment and retention?

I think we need to focus on both bringing in new teachers and keeping the teachers and staff we already have. We should make programs like the Delta Teacher Assistant Certificate more visible and make it easier for people to understand how they can get started in this field. But hiring more people is only part of the solution. We also need to look at workloads, working hours, job security, the work environment, training, and mentorship. New EAs, especially those working with students who have higher needs, should receive proper orientation, training, and ongoing support. We also need better workforce planning. We should track vacancies, turnover, and how long positions remain unfilled so we can understand where the biggest gaps are and respond earlier. I see two main challenges: having enough funding to fill the positions we need and having enough qualified teachers and support staff to fill them. We need to work on both at the same time.

6. Given that funding is limited, what are your budget priorities for the Delta School District?

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Budgeting in a situation where resources are limited means making difficult decisions while staying true to our fundamental principles. For me, the most important aspect is the classroom. I will make sure that funding is directed towards essential support staff who work directly with students, resources that promote inclusive education for all learners, and measures that proactively ensure safety in schools. Additionally, it is crucial to concentrate on improving how efficiently we operate and on the well-being of our staff, so that teachers feel adequately supported in their roles. As a trustee, I am committed to making sure that every single dollar we spend is in line with ensuring the safety of students, promoting inclusion, and maintaining the long-term stability of the district.

7. Currently, in Delta, decisions are made by trustees prior to the public Board meeting. Do you feel an obligation to make your decision-making process more transparent to the public and what steps will you take to ensure this?

Yes, I believe trustees have an obligation to be transparent and accountable to the public. People should understand not only what decisions are made, but also why they are made. As a trustee, I would support sharing more information before major decisions, providing plain-language explanations of budgets and proposals, and creating meaningful opportunities for staff, families and community members to give input early enough to make a difference. I would also support more regular meetings with frontline staff and community stakeholders. Most importantly, we need to report back on what we heard and explain how that input influenced the final decision. Consultation isn't just asking people for their opinion. It's showing them that their input was considered. Transparency builds trust, and that's something I would work to strengthen in Delta.