

Delta School Trustee Candidate Responses

Name: Val Windsor

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

I have been a school trustee for the past 4 terms and believe that the various experiences I have had in education (Teacher for 32 years – 29 in Delta, DTA President for 8 years and 15 years as a trustee) have been valuable to the Board. I would like to continue to bring my experience in public education and the need for continuous advocacy for funding to the table once again. As trustees, we are responsible for governing the school district, our primary mandate being to improve student outcomes. We also determine policy from which procedures are developed to run the district. Our only employee is the Superintendent who is charged with all other staff related decisions. Advocacy is a large part of the work of trustees. Through the provincial organization, BCSTA, and by being involved in provincial elections, we can get the message out to the public and the government about the need for increased funding. We need to work with our partner groups in this advocacy as well. Also, as trustees we are expected to show up prepared for Board meetings. I try to attend as many school and district functions as I can to keep informed about what is happening in the district and meeting, listening and speaking with employees and parents, which then helps with my ability to make informed decisions. In Delta, we enjoy good relationships with our employee groups and DPAC and while there are differences, they can usually be discussed and resolved to the satisfaction of each group. If not, there are process in place to help resolve disputes. These relationships exist because every partner groups works on them.

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

Creating an inclusive school community begins with funding various initiatives and programmes. The Board has funded Delta's Inclusive Learning department beyond what the Ministry provides to support the programmes and provide extra staff, both CUPE and DTA members where possible. We spend \$1.75 for every dollar the district receives in funding. Our staff does amazing work with the many students who have diverse abilities and we need to continue to support this work and the staff who make it happen. These funds also support specialized training for staff including EAs and CYCs and provide materials that support classroom instruction such as SOGI materials. I support the team approach in working with these students because no one teacher or EA can do the work in isolation from others. LST staff, counsellors, CYCs and inclusion team members working collaboratively help students more effectively and provide a more inclusive learning experience for students.

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

As a district, we need to continue to provide funding resources and programmes that support Indigenous students and their families so that staff will feel more comfortable teaching these students in a manner that supports their culture and traditions. Work is well underway in this area as is an ongoing building of the relationship with TFN and Musqueam communities who need to be part of the conversation and decisions in all areas involving Indigenous education. Staff need to be able to attend Indigenous education programmes and ceremonies to advance their own Truth and Reconciliation journeys and they need to see trustees at these events as well. It has been an honour for me to attend Indigenous ceremonies and learning opportunities that have been provided by the District and by TFN and that we have been invited to be part of.

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?

One thing I would like to see is the re-establishment of the Health and Safety Committee. Before it was replaced with other programmes, I felt that it served a valuable purpose in that DTA and CUPE had a place at the table to share their concerns. While both employee groups have regular personnel meetings with staff, a committee devoted exclusively to the area of Health and Safety would be able to focus more intently on student and staff safety. While we have increased the Inclusive Learning budget to help with unexpected challenges, perhaps more of that funding could be directed to rapid responses. Also, there is a need for staff to create a safety plan for students with these challenges and for all staff who work with them to be informed of the plan and to receive the training to be able to successfully deal with the students and their issues. Students and staff need to feel supported in being safe at school.

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

This is a problem that exists across the province. In the lower mainland, all school districts are competing for the services of EAs. We run our own DTAC programme in Delta to help train more EAs but this doesn't seem to be enough to supply the district with the staff we need. I think the district could advertise the positions available more

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widely in the lower mainland. One concern is the lack of hours available to CUPE staff, many who need to work a second job to help make ends meet. As funds become available, the hours attached to some positions are being increased which helps with retention. Sometimes, the issue is not being able to find a qualified person to fill a position. The district has hired some CUPE staff who have training in specialized areas to support their colleagues in a mentorship role and this has proven to be successful. Job satisfaction should be a priority with CUPE and all staff. The role they play in the district is critical to student success and their voices need to be heard at the table. Again, there is a need for ongoing advocacy for funding the CUPE positions and that is what trustees should be doing as part of their work.

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

Despite receiving less than adequate funding from the provincial government to cover the actual costs of running a school district, Delta does extremely well with the funding that we receive, supplementing it by hosting International Students, offering programmes district wide, renting gym space, etc. Graduation rates of our students are among the highest in the province but as a district, we are always asking staff to do more with less and they continue to do so. It's been that way since I was a teacher in the district! It took provincial job action several years ago for Delta teachers, whose salaries were second from the bottom provincially (except for Post Baccalaureate Diploma degrees) to be raised to the provincial average. I have never been so glad to tell Delta teachers that they would be in the average range for salaries and that most of them would see a decent raise in their wages! As a trustee, I have always supported keeping the funding in the classroom ensuring that students remain the priority which means teachers and EAs in classrooms. Funding for the JEAP programme is a priority for the Board as are Indigenous Education and Inclusive Learning programmes and resources. An emerging issue requiring funding is cybersecurity costs which increase every year as the internet explodes. We need to protect staff and students as outside forces attempt to wreak havoc on our system. The need for advocacy is ongoing.

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?

When I look at the decision making that the Board undergoes, I believe that a lot of thought and effort goes into bringing a motion to a public meeting. Consider the Annual Budget Process, Vision 2030 and the Strategic Plan, all of which involved extensive

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consultation with the Delta education community – staff, students, parents and education partners. As a four-term trustee and former Board Chair, I have seen first-hand how recommendations and motions are developed, reviewed and brought forward with this input. In the Budget process, for example, trustees make their opinions known at the public meeting where it is passed, not before, and we explain why we voted the way we did. We have changed our minds at the last minute and added something to the budget because of a compelling presentation all while understanding that we are tasking staff with finding some other area of the budget to cut to pay for the addition or to take the funds from the Surplus account which is used for one time expenditures or providing support to programmes in a limited way. With the exception of the unrestricted funds, all other surplus have designations for use and are not included in the budget because of their tentative nature. I prefer a motion to come before the Board in a public meeting where all the details are known in advance so I can make an informed decision at that time. Often, staff input is needed for the motions, especially if there are staffing and/or budget implications. This input needs to happen in advance of a motion appearing at a public meeting. If more two-way engagement is needed, I am always open to improving the lines of communication throughout the year. In the past, the Board has hosted dinners with each of the partner groups so they can get to know and understand each other's positions on education related matters that impact their members. I would like to see this event being held annually for the express purpose of building relationships and improving communication.