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Section 1 – Accountability

1. In your opinion, what is the role of parents in the Board's decision-making process?

Parents and their children are the clients of the OCDSB. The Board exists for no other reason other to provide the best education for those clients that is possible under the law and withing the funding provided by the Province.

Parents have an opportunity to voice their concerns in several ways. First, it is the responsibility of each school principal to consult with and be aware of the specific needs and concerns of the families he or she serves. These needs and concerns are passed through the superintendents to appropriate part of the administration to influence their policies and planning.

Second, it is the responsibility of each trustee to consult with the communities in their zone to identify these same issues and concerns so that they can be voiced at board and committee meetings to influence the discussion and decision-making process. Organizations like OPEN and OCASC are a valuable resource in this process.

2. If you are elected, how do you see your role as a trustee in the decision-making process?

My experience as an teacher, principal, special advisor to the Ministry and my training as a senior military officer has provided me with a unique combination of skills. I understand educational issues and I have leadership and team-building skills that I would use to assist our new board of trustees in becoming a decisive, focussed and collaborative body.

I have no special agenda. I have not been mentored by any special interest group and I have no long-term political aspirations or allegiances. This allows me to work unhindered and focus entirely on the issues as they arise.

3. Do you believe that trustees should serve as intermediaries between parents and the Board and/or their school (when all other avenues have been exhausted)?

Yes

Please explain.

4. Do you believe the Board's decision-making process could be more transparent?

Yes

If yes, what measures would you propose to improve the Board's transparency and accountability?

I plan on revealing upcoming issues on my website and asking for input from parents. Following each board meeting I will publish the main debates and freely and honestly disclose my vote, along with the rationale I used to make the vote.

5. What do you believe should have greater weight in the decisions made by trustees: the advice of educational professionals or the input of parents and communities?

Input of parents and communities

Please explain.

The parents and students are the clients and their needs must take priority.

However, the advice of the educational professionals is of great value. If the advice of the professionals is contrary to the will of the majority of parents, then the board has a responsibility to study this gap. In reality, these differences occur quite rarely but when they do the controversy is great and the emotions are quite high.

Invariably it becomes an issue of disappointing one group of parents or another. The only solution is to ensure everyone is aware of all the dimensions of the issue and that everyone involved gets a voice.

6. This past year has seen an increase in in-camera (closed-door) committee and Board meetings. As a trustee, would you undertake to ensure that in-camera meetings are held only when necessary to protect the privacy of individuals?

Yes

Additional Comments

There are also legal requirements to hold in-camera meetings for other reasons. I think what you are asking for is assurance that these in-camera meetings are not used as a mechanism to make decisions that should have been made in a public forum -- and my answer to that is yes.

7. Last year, the Board reviewed its Alternative Schools program and its Secondary Gifted program. Despite strong stakeholder support for these programs, Board staff recommended that they either be closed or eventually phased out. As a trustee, what kind of information would you seek and what kind of questions would you ask in order to come to a decision when staff recommendations are opposed to the views of the community?

The obvious question that needs to be asked is:

"What is the alternative to alternative schools?" Most of the students will not be successful in conventional schools.

I would have to be convinced that a viable, more economical, proven educational replacement can be provided. Simply abandoning these students is not responsible and not good for society in general.

8. Good decision-making requires good and comprehensive data which is shared with all public education stakeholders. What will you do as a trustee to ensure that Board reports are released to the public in a timely fashion and contain accurate information?

I intend to write a summary of the key debates and decisions on my website for the information of the parents and students of Barrhaven, Knoxdale and Merivale. If there are issues arising for future board meetings, I intend to make everyone aware of the upcoming debate and invite input and comment in the discussion area of my site.

9. Teachers and support staff who work in the classroom every day with students are well-acquainted with student needs, yet are not permitted to contribute to the public discussion when changes to programs and services are under consideration. Do you believe that the experience and knowledge of the professionals in the classroom should be better represented in the Board's decision-making process?

It should, but there should be appropriate venues for them to be consulted. Public employees participating in public discussion about their employers' policy is a dangerous venue for input. There is a need to develop better internal means of consultation and input if current employees feel that their expertise is not being voiced.

Section 2 – Educational Issues

10. Given the chronic under-funding of education, what new ideas would you bring to the table to address the Board's ongoing financial challenges?

Ottawa is one of the few communities in Ontario that is expanding, and its school-age population is growing steadily. The Ministry of Education needs to be brought in as a partner with a credible board to manage this situation. They hold the purse strings. They have a responsibility to help with these issues. We must form a new board with a clear strategy, a Board that knows where it needs new schools (and knows which underused schools it will close). This Board, understanding the costs that are needed to prepare proper programmes for the future and spending its money efficiently and according to Ministry direction and priorities, would have credibility in demanding additional funds from the Ministry.

11. It can be a challenge to meet the demand for French Immersion while maintaining a strong, viable English program. How important do you think it is for the Board to respond to the ever-increasing demand for French Immersion in this region?

Very important

Additional Comments

It is a reality in the NCR that students who develop strong language skills in both languages have a distinct career advantage. Provision of Immersion French

is, therefore, a community need and should be addressed by the OCDSB. This unique requirement needs to be conveyed to the Ministry of Education for consideration when it distributes money.

12. Do you favour the Board's revised student transfer policy that restricts students' ability to transfer from their neighbourhood school to the school of their choice?

No

Please explain.

My educational career was in another region of Ontario and that board had a much more liberal approach to attending school outside the school boundary. Their policy was that transfers out of boundary were permitted provided the two principals agreed, and that the receiving school was not at capacity. Parents waived their right to free transportation if they transferred out of boundary.

I think that the current boundaries are wrong and need to be redefined. I believe this could resolve many of the issues.

13. While the Ontario Ministry of Education is encouraging school boards to integrate students with special learning needs into the regular classroom whenever appropriate, it recognizes specialized classes as one of a range of options for exceptional students. At present, the OCDSB provides specialized classes for students with autism, Asperger's syndrome, developmental disabilities, giftedness and a number of other exceptionalities. Do you support the continued provision of specialized classes for students with these and other special educational needs?

Yes

13. a) If yes, what would you do to reduce waiting lists and improve student access to these classes?

I wish I had a simple solution to this issue. The fact is that the Board has managed to produce a balanced budget by trimming in virtually every area. If any programme is to be expanded it must be done at the expense of something else. So if we want more specialized classes, we need to take from somewhere else. Should we close some schools, abandon gifted programmes, cut back on

the provision of buses, close alternative schools, increase class sizes? If we are so chronically underfunded that we cannot provide all the essential educational services, then we must appeal to the Ministry of Education. A credible board could make such a presentation.

13. b) If you answered no, how would you ensure that both exceptional students and their peers without special learning needs receive the support they need in order to learn and thrive in the regular classroom?

[no response]

13. c) When changes are proposed to special programs, would you agree that any proposed changes should first be evaluated through pilot programs with well-defined, measurable outcomes?

Yes

14. Recent changes to program delivery at this Board have reduced access to specialist teachers in the arts, science, physical education, and other subjects, especially at the intermediate level. Do you believe that students are receiving enough subject specialist education in the elementary/intermediate years?

No

Please explain.

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15. At the same time as students have less access to outdoor education centres, research is showing that children need experiences in the natural world for improved learning, for their well-being, and to be informed citizens about the environment. Would you increase the role of outdoor education centres in our students' education?

Yes

If yes, how?

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16. The Alternative Schools program was reviewed this past year and found by the Board to have many benefits for students. As a trustee, would you ensure

this program is continued and is extended to zones where it's not currently available?

Yes

If yes, what are your ideas to make this happen?

I am a firm believer in the use of alternative schools. When this option is not present, these students leave the system and we lose an opportunity to produce an educated, productive citizen.

17. Ottawa receives more refugees than any other city in Ontario, has the second largest immigrant population in the province, and the first language of approximately one third of Ottawa residents is neither English nor French. Do you believe that the OCDSB is doing as well as it could to serve the needs of students and families that are new to Canada?

No

If no, what changes would you propose?

Section 3 – Philosophy

18. Current trustees: Please give an example of something you did last year to further public education. Other candidates: Please name a specific effort you would promote if you were elected.

I would like to contribute to changing the culture of the board. Our current board has struggled to find a way to effectively do business as a team. I would focus first on developing a more effective, team-oriented way of conducting business with the new board. A group of trustees that clearly share a common strategy will have more credibility with the Ministry of Education and their needs will be recognized and their strategies are more likely to be approved and supported.

19. What is your vision of education and its role in our community?

I believe in the concept of the community school that is staffed, equipped and resourced to provide a spectrum of educational experiences that will satisfy the needs of the vast majority of the students in that school's community. I believe

kids should go to school in their own community and that bussing is an expensive and over-used stop-gap measure.

Bussing should be used for those children and youths that have educational needs that are best served in centres of excellence.