

School District No. 33, Chilliwack Board of Education Trustee Election Candidate
Responses to CUPE Local 411 Questionnaire

Candidates (Alphabetical)	Voting Information:
Katie Bartel	General Voting: Saturday, October 17, 2026, 8:00am to 8:00pm Locations: Landing Sports Centre: 45530 Spadina Avenue Chilliwack Heritage Park: 44140 Luckakuck Way Cultus Lake Community School: 71 Sunnyside Blvd. Rosedale Traditional Community School: 50850 Yale Rd. Yarrow Community School: 4595 Wilson Street
Barbara Bednarski	
Brooke Bouwsema-Cardinal	Advanced Voting: October 7, 2026, 8:00am to 8:00pm Landing Sports Centre: 45530 Spadina Avenue October 14, 2026, 8:00am to 8:00pm Chilliwack Heritage Park: 44140 Luckakuck Way
Michael Carter	
Marina Garmon	<i>*Did not respond</i> <i>**Did not respond on time</i>
<i>Hugh Hamilton*</i>	
Paul Henderson	
Sadie Hesketh	
Leah Kelley	
Christine Kruger	
<i>Sudakar Meganathan**</i>	
<i>Cary Moore*</i>	
Darren Ollinger	
<i>Hayden Rampton*</i>	
Willow Reichelt	
Margaret Reid	
David Swankey	
Brian Vangarderen	

CUPE Local 411 drafted and emailed each Chilliwack school trustee candidate ten (10) questions for answering. The question and each candidate's answers can be found on the following pages:

- Why are you seeking election as a School Trustee, and what experience would you bring to this role? **(pages 2 to 6)**
 - What do you think your role as a trustee is?
 - What do you think your role as Trustee is not?
 - What is your primary reason for running for school trustee?
- Private vs. Public Funding: **(pages 6 to 8)**
 - What is your stance on the provincial government allocating public tax dollars to fund private and/or independent schools?
- Violence in Our Schools: **(pages 8 to 9)**
 - Education Assistants face physical, mental and emotional violence almost every day.
 - How can you support CUPE Local 411 in addressing student violence?
- Overcrowding: **(pages 9 to 11)**
 - SD33 continues to experience rapid growth and overcrowding.
 - What actions would you take to advocate for additional school space, staffing, and resources?
- Meaningful Inclusion: **(pages 11 to 13)**
 - Some students require supports that exceed current staffing and resources.
 - How would you advocate for meaningful inclusion while ensuring the safety and well-being of SD33 staff?
- Respite: **(pages 13 to 15)**
 - Some students are forced to come to school and spend significant time out of the classroom due to violence. This directly puts our members in harms way.
 - How would you address this issue?

7. Marginalized Groups: (pages 15 to 17)

- Some CUPE members experience discrimination, harassment, or hate-based behaviour from students, parents, guardians, and/or members of the public.
- What role should Trustees play in promoting a respectful and inclusive workplace?
- How will you ensure that your personal views on sexual orientation do not conflict with or override established Human Rights Codes with respect to our membership's safety, student safety, curriculum?

8. Collaboration: (pages 18 to 19)

- How would you ensure that CUPE members have meaningful opportunities to share concerns and perspectives with the Board?
- Do you support meeting with CUPE Local 411 Executive Board, outside of formal partnership meetings, to better understand workplace issues affecting our members?
- Why or why not?

9. Labour Relations: (pages 20 to 21)

- What do you believe is the Trustee's role in supporting a respectful and productive relationship between the Board and CUPE Local 411?

10. Bargaining Support: (pages 21 to 22)

- During collective bargaining, Trustees ultimately help shape the district's approach to labour relations.
- What principles would guide your support for fair and respectful bargaining with CUPE Local 411?

CANDIDATE RESPONSES:**1. Why are you seeking election as a School Trustee, and what experience would you bring to this role?**

- What do you think your role as a trustee is?
- What do you think your role as Trustee is not?
- What is your primary reason for running for school trustee?

K. Bartel: **Why are you seeking election as a School Trustee, and what experience would you bring to this role:** I have been advocating for my own children over the past 13 years and had to learn how to navigate a system that is not easy for families to understand. Along the way, I noticed the gaps and where policy and practice do not always match. I took what I learned and began helping other families, then began representing parents through PAC, DPAC, and BCCPAC. I am running because Chilliwack needs an advocate at the board table who gets it. I understand both the family and the governance side. I know how to build relationships, ask hard questions, and keep pushing for change. **What do you think your role as a Trustee is:** I see the role of Trustee as a governor, an advocate, and a supporter of education. Specifically, Trustees hire and evaluate the Superintendent, approve the budget, set policy, help set the strategic direction of the district, and advocate to the Ministry. But the job is also about listening to the students, staff and families and noticing where things are not working the way they are supposed to. Trustees need to stay connected to schools and community, ask good questions, and use the proper process to push for answers and change when policy and practice do not match. **What do you think your role as Trustee is not:** I see the role of Trustee as a governor, an advocate, and a supporter of education. Specifically, Trustees hire and evaluate the Superintendent, approve the budget, set policy, help set the strategic direction of the district, and advocate to the Ministry. But the job is also about listening to the students, staff and families and noticing where things are not working the way they are supposed to. Trustees need to stay connected to schools and community, ask good questions, and use the proper process to push for answers and change when policy and practice do not match. **What is your primary reason for running for school Trustee:** I care deeply about public education and inclusion. I believe education is one of our best chances to shape the future, and I want every child to have a place in that future. After years

of advocating in this district and province, I have seen what works, where families and staff get stuck, and how decisions made at one level can play out very differently in a school. I am running because I want to bring that experience to the Board and help turn what I have learned through advocacy into meaningful system change.

B. Bednarski: What do you think your role as a Trustee is: I believe the role of school is not merely to ratify and explain top-down policies to the general public. I believe the role of elected school trustees should be similar to that of other elected officials: to present policy ideas at election time, to hear policy ideas from the voters between elections and to do their best to carry out their democratic will.

B. Bouwsema-Cardinal: What do you think your role as a Trustee is: My role as Trustee is to represent the voices and wishes of the members of the sd33 community in collaboration with the rest of the board and in accordance with the ministry of education. **What do you think your role as Trustee is not:** The role of a trustee is not to make anyone feel unwelcome or unsafe within the school community, speak over or undermine educators, staff or families, veer from the responsibilities and expectations of the role of Trustee. **What is your primary reason for running for school Trustee:** My primary reason for running is to advocate for families, staff, and students that want someone willing to get creative about how our district can adapt and accommodate the many changes that come with being such a rapidly growing district and community.

M. Carter: Why are you seeking election as a School Trustee, and what experience would you bring to this role: As a father of four children, I have a vested interest in our community, both now and in the future. SD33 has real strengths, including teachers and staff who care deeply about our students and the community. At the same time, I believe there are some institutional policies and directions producing results that are below what we should expect. I am seeking election because I want to help set policies and direction that will enable our teachers and staff to do what they do best: educate our children. **What do you think your role as a Trustee is:** A trustee is one of seven people who collectively make governance decisions for the school district. In particular, the board sets policies and strategic direction, directs the superintendent, approves the budget and accounts to the public. **What do you think your role as Trustee is not:** There are many things outside a trustee's role. Importantly, though, the board as a whole is not meant to manage the operations of the district, and a trustee has no individual authority. **What is your primary reason for running for school Trustee:** Described above.

M. Garmon: Why are you seeking election as a School Trustee, and what experience would you bring to this role: We need to specifically re-evaluate current practices, to ensure that each student experiences education success based on their abilities. I have specialized in services providing youth, families, MCFD and Indigenous delegated childcare authorities with family and child specific support. Ensuring these programs fit each individuals specific needs.

P. Henderson: What do you think your role as a Trustee is: To paraphrase a former trustee: The role is lay the tracks and maintain the rails, but don't play with the trains. To use a hockey metaphor, trustees aren't coaches or trainers or support staff nor are trustees team owners, they are the general managers. They should make sure everything is running smoothly, tweak policy and budgets where needed, and oversee the success of the team. Trustees should listen to parents, students, staff, and advocate for the interests of the entire district, not just a certain school or the pet interest of a certain set of parents. **What do you think your role as Trustee is not:** This question likely arises from the school board candidates and former trustees who don't seem to understand the role, who want to get involved in provincial government policy, interfere with curriculum and library books, and criticize district staff. Two examples of what a trustee should **not** be doing: One, when former trustee Heather Maahs and Darrel Furgason read at the board table from library books they deemed too lascivious. Two, when Barry Neufeld spent months attacking SOGI 123 irrevocably alienating staff and students in the LGBTQ community. Don't play with the trains. Don't tell the coach who should be benched. **What is your primary reason for running for school Trustee:** I have been a journalist in Chilliwack for 20 years. I or a colleague have read the agenda and/or

attended more than 600 school board and city council meetings. As a reporter, I tended to overlook how much I know. The deadline to file papers was Sept. 11 at 4 p.m. At 1:30 p.m. that day, I prepared a story to post at 4 p.m. about with the candidates. As I looked at the school board candidates over and over, I paused. With respect, I could only see five electable people. So, I figured I should do it.

S. Hesketh: Why are you seeking election as a School Trustee, and what experience would you bring to this role: I am seeking election because I'd like to put my best efforts forward to try to secure funding for more student seats, more teachers, more supports such as education assistants. I would also like to try to secure more funding for mental health training for staff, as well as work to put together a transparent, public-facing 10-year facility plan. I bring with me plenty of board experience with the British Columbia Association of Broadcasters, the Chilliwack Chamber, the Downtown BIA, Soroptimist International of Chilliwack Club and Flight Fest Society. **What do you think your role as a Trustee is:** The board sets strategic direction and local policy, establishes the district's annual budget, and advocates for public education on behalf of the community. Trustees focus on student achievement and well-being. They make decisions to benefit the entire district while representing the interests of everyone in the community. **What do you think your role as Trustee is not:** Trustees do not set curriculum, manage daily school operations or hire or fire teachers and staff. Trustees do not make unilateral decisions. They are just one vote at the table. Decisions are made by the board as a whole. **What is your primary reason for running for school Trustee:** To advocate for more funding to try and catch up with the student population. My son is in school middle school. I watched his elementary school get increasingly full over the years, eventually overflowing into portables. The middle school is far more crowded than the elementary school was, and by the looks of things, it doesn't get any better in high school. His teachers and the entire support staff, counsellors and admin included are burnt out. I would love to be a part of the group that helps to make this a problem of the past.

L. Kelley: Why are you seeking election as a School Trustee, and what experience would you bring to this role: I am an educator, parent, author, and advocate and believe public education is foundational to our functioning democracy. I have a Doctorate in Education (SFU) and my work and research have focused on inclusive education, literacy, neurodiversity/disability, and helping schools understand and support all students. I taught for 30 years in SD33. I've taught kindergarten through to the university level, and have worked closely with students, families, educators, and community organizations. I'm deeply committed to advocating for public education, and understand the role of trustee is responsible governance - including developing/supporting the Strategic Plan, reviewing/setting policy, approving the budget, supporting student well-being and academic achievement, and community advocacy. I know I have a lot to learn – but I bring a lot to the table.

K. Kruger: Why are you seeking election as a School Trustee, and what experience would you bring to this role: I am seeking election because I believe strongly in public education and believe my experience and values could be an asset to the school board. For the past 35 years, I have worked as a social worker with the Ministry of Children and Family Development. Throughout my career, I have gained extensive experience negotiating and managing contracts between service providers and the Provincial Government. I have also supervised and hired staff, managed budgets, and worked through complex and emotionally charged family situations to help achieve positive outcomes. These experiences have taught me how to listen, work collaboratively, solve difficult problems, and make thoughtful decisions—skills I believe would serve me well as a school trustee. **What do you think your role as a Trustee is:** Trustees help set the overall vision and goals for the school district, focusing on student success and improving schools. They are responsible for the budget by reviewing and approving how the district spends money. The board helps create local policies and guidelines that help schools run smoothly and fairly. The board is responsible for hiring the Superintendent, who is responsible for managing the day-to-day operations of the school district. Finally, the trustee represents the community. They listen to parents, families, and community members, bring their concerns and ideas to the board, and help ensure the district is focused on the success of each and every student. **What do you think your role as Trustee is not:** A school board trustee does not run day-to-day district

operations, set curriculum or manage individual school staff. They do not intervene in classrooms, nor handle individual parent disputes. **What is your primary reason for running for school Trustee:** As I approach the end of my social services career, I still have more to give. I believe the experiences I have gained as a parent of three children educated in public school and in my career would be an asset to the board.

D. Ollinger: Why are you seeking election as a School Trustee, and what experience would you bring to this role: Being an old school right wing traditionalist, I would like to import my personal convictions and values with the demographic target parents with similar values who make the life decisions before the student leaves home.

W. Reichelt: Why are you seeking election as a School Trustee, and what experience would you bring to this role : I hope to use my experience to continue to move our district forward. I attended school in Chilliwack and taught in the district for 14 years. Both of my children went to school here, and I have been a trustee for eight years. **What do you think your role as a Trustee is:** The role of a trustee is advocacy and governance. We advocate to other levels of government both as a board and as part of the BC School Trustees Association (asking for things like increased funding or better supports for students). Locally, we make policy, pass the budget, develop the strategic plan in consultation with partners, and communicate the Board's values and vision to the public. The most important role of a trustee is to work every day to make public education an inclusive space where all students can thrive. **What do you think your role as Trustee is not:** The role of a trustee is not writing curriculum (this is set provincially), hiring or disciplining staff (this is the role of HR, principals and the superintendent), disciplining students (this is the principal's job) or choosing classroom resources (this is the educator's job). Importantly, the role of a trustee is definitely not to use the position to advocate against the rights of members of our school community. **What is your primary reason for running for school Trustee:** I believe that school communities work best when all members (students, staff and families) feel respected, included and valued. The Chilliwack school district is currently in a good place, with the board and partner groups focused on working together to improve outcomes for students. There is more work to do, and I am ready and willing to do it.

M. Reid: Why are you seeking election as a School Trustee, and what experience would you bring to this role and What do you think your role as a Trustee is: Trustees are each one part of a governing Board elected by the community to oversee District direction from a governance lens. Aside from the core tasks of creating the strategic plan, hiring the superintendent and approving the budget, Trustees advocate to higher levels of government on behalf of the District, represent the Board in the community, and liaise with partners to make sure that all voices are heard at the table. **What do you think your role as Trustee is not:** Trustees are non-operational- they do not involve themselves in the day-to-day running of school sites. Trustees do not supervise, hire or fire teachers, principals or other school staff. They do not set curriculum or have any say in Ministry mandated resources. Individual Trustees hold no legal authority- they act as part of a governing body and cannot speak on behalf of or make decisions for the Board. **What is your primary reason for running for school Trustee:** I am running because I believe in the value of public education. I am a parent with three kids in our District and that firsthand experience is a valuable asset at the table that I would like to contribute. I am running again because I am a strong member of our existing team, I love the work, I am proud of what our District has accomplished, and I am looking forward to collaborating on future solutions to create a better environment for students, families, and staff.

D. Swankey: Why are you seeking election as a School Trustee and experience would you bring to the role? What do you think your role as Trustee is? What do you think your role as Trustee is not? What is your primary reason for running for school Trustee? I've had the privilege of serving on the Board of Education over the past two terms. I remain steadfast in the belief that a robust, inclusive, and locally accountable public education system is essential to the health of our community; it is the best opportunity to ensure every child has a brighter future. Beyond the Board of Education, I bring considerable board experience at both the community and provincial levels. I'm humbly asking for your support on October 17th; to learn more about me and why I am running, please visit www.davidswankey.com.

B. VanGarderen: Why are you seeking election as a School Trustee and experience would you bring to the role? What do you think your role as Trustee is? To provide governance, oversight and accountability to management for the Chilliwack school district. It is also the voice to advocate for the needs of the Chilliwack school district and the provincial government. My role is to help advocate for students with diverse needs and welcome all students no matter who they are. What do you think your role as Trustee is not: To push a personal agenda based off my beliefs. It is not to manage the everyday goings on of the school district but to look at the big picture and guide the leaders of the district. What is your primary reason for running for school Trustee: I currently work in the public school system, and I am a Teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. I see, teach and hear the positive work that many people are doing out there. I also hear the struggles and talk about how hard it is to support students and how there must be a better way. I want to be a part of those decisions and I want to help find ways and advocate for those concerns.

2. Private vs. Public Funding:

- What is your stance on the provincial government allocating public tax dollars to fund private and/or independent schools?

K. Bartel: I am wholeheartedly against public dollars funding private and independent schools. Our public schools are already stretched, and until they are properly funded and resourced, I do not believe we should be sending public money somewhere else. It also creates a more unequal system when access to certain opportunities depends on what a family can afford. Public dollars should stay in public education and be used to make sure every student has access to the staff, supports, resources, and opportunities they need.

B. Bednarski: I am aware of a growing trend of parents turning to private school enrolment reducing the share of funding received by the public school system. These parents are shouldering a significant financial burden to place their children in schools that reflect the values and needs of their families. Thus, they are asking the provincial government to take on that financial burden. This is not sustainable since there is a finite limit to the amount of provincial funding available. It is my hope that by increasing the diversity of schools in the public system and welcoming parental input, that more families can be lured back into the public school system and recapture that funding.

B. Bouwsema-Cardinal: I believe provincial tax funding should be directed toward public education and resources. If a family chooses to pursue private education, they should also be responsible for privately funding that education and if they would like to see their values reflected in public schools, they are welcome to insert their voices where appropriate.

M. Carter: I support the province's current funding model, which allocates up to 50% per FTE student for independent schools. I believe this strikes a balance between families with students in independent schools contributing to provincial funding like everyone else, and the reality that public schools carry certain obligations which independent schools do not.

M. Garmon: I support limited public funding for independent and private schools when it supports our public system. Funding that follows a 60/40 split between government and parents could create a public-system benefit that stays in our schools to ease overcrowding and improve inclusion supports, classroom resources, and educational outcomes for every student. That system benefit could support bringing Learning Centres back to every public school. These dedicated spaces would help make inclusive education something that actually works for high-needs students and special learners. Teachers, Educational Assistants and all students would gain better resources, so that every child is taught to their full potential.

P. Hendersen: As a citizen and a parent of children in public schools, I have strong opinions on this topic, in principle. Public dollars should not go towards private education, particularly religious-based schools or private schools attended by upper-

middle class kids. There is an insidious ideological push towards privatization fostered and fomented by people who fund and run organizations such as the Fraser Institute, which undermines trust in public education with their pernicious school rankings. In practice, however, I've heard the argument that pulling their funding completely would overwhelm the public system. On that, I admit I need to learn more.

S. Hesketh: I do not feel it's fair to use public tax dollars for private or independent schools because it drains vital resources from public education. Private schools in BC retain the right to selective admissions. They can turn away students based on specialized criteria, behavioral histories, or specific religious alignments, whereas public schools must accept every child. Let's use public tax dollars to fund public education.

L. Kelley: I don't believe public tax dollars should fund private and/or independent schools. Public education is crucial for the health of society and is currently underfunded and struggling. When systems aren't adequately funded, it is too frequently the most vulnerable who lose access to educational supports, but such shortfalls affect every learner. Schools are better places for all students when we have systems and resources in place that support adaptation, flexibility, innovation, and inclusion. As a Trustee, I will have the opportunity to play a role in expressing to the provincial government how critical it is to fully fund public education, and how this is intrinsically connected to addressing inequity and ensuring the success of all students.

C. Kruger: Public money directed to private schools can take essential resources away from the public education system. I believe that using tax dollars to subsidize private school tuition supports families who already have the financial means to choose private education, while public schools are often struggling to meet the diverse needs of their students. I believe education is a fundamental public service and that every student deserves access to a strong, well-funded public education system. Public education should be strengthened and supported, rather than weakened by directing public resources toward private alternatives.

D. Ollinger: Since it is the parent's responsibility to decide which school to place their children in; either a private or public institution based on the values that those schools' present, I feel that the government should provide at least an equal amount of funding to each of those institutions in a meaningful way to balance operating costs.

W. Reichelt: I do not believe that private schools should get any provincial funding. There are two arguments for continuing to fund private schools. The first is that since they are only funded at 50%, it actually saves money, because we'd have to pay twice as much and build more schools if all of those kids returned to the public system. I reject this argument, because I think most of those families would keep their kids in private school even if they had to pay more. The second argument is that because the funding is contingent on private schools following BC curriculum, the funding actually helps ensure that private school students get a proper education. This is a better argument, but I think this could be addressed in a different way than massive amounts of funding.

M. Reid: While I understand that it is a nuanced issue that is beyond the purview of a Trustee at a local level, I do not personally believe that public funding should go to private education institutions.

D. Swankey: In short, public dollars belong in public schools. I also serve as an elected director with the BC School Trustees Association (BCSTA) and trustees across the province delivered a clear message on this point at our most recent AGM, advocating for the cessation of public funding for independent school with the exception of First Nations independent schools and independent schools whose primary purpose is to support students with disabilities and diverse abilities. As a BCSTA director, I'll be supporting this message going directly to government with the request that those resources be reallocated to public schools.

B. VanGardenen: I would like to take after the Edmonton public school model where all private and independent schools are under the public system. This means there are policies and procedures to help support and create inclusive system while still honouring the want for religious teachings. Personally I am a believer in public education and would like to continue to support it.

3. Violence in Our Schools:

- Education Assistants face physical, mental and emotional violence almost every day.
- How can you support CUPE Local 411 in addressing student violence?

K. Bartel: Safe schools require more than policies on paper. I have seen what happens when staff are expected to manage increasingly complex needs without enough training, planning time, or support. EAs should not be going to work expecting to be hurt. I would want to hear directly from CUPE members about where current procedures are failing, then push for changes through the Superintendent and Board. That means better prevention and planning, appropriate supports for students, clear responses when violence happens, and real follow up and support for the staff affected.

B. Bednarski: I would create in-house counselling positions to provide immediate support to workers who have faced sexual assaults and others traumatic attacks. While this would increase staffing costs, I believe it would be offset by reducing the paid time off claimed by workers.

B. Bouwsema-Cardinal: Advocating for mental health supports for the entire school network. Outbursts or Dysregulation is a way to signal that we need help. In order to promote harmony in the learning environment, schools need to have accommodations such as adequately ratioed EA support, School Counsellors and Youth Support Workers. Additionally staff should feel comfortable discussing and reporting workplace violence in any capacity without worrying about punitive approaches harming student rapport.

M. Carter: As an employer, the Board of Education must take workplace violence seriously, both morally and under the WorkSafeBC regulations. The district's strategic plan prioritizes human flourishing of all, which must include EAs. Although there is a Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee, I would advocate for a standing report from the superintendent on violence in the workplace so the board can set performance expectations to address the violence EAs are experiencing.

M. Garmon: I will support CUPE Local 411 by treating staff safety as non-negotiable. There is important need for securing funding for specialized one-on-one support and smaller classes for students with severe behavioural challenges, ensuring regular classrooms remain safe and academically focused. Re-creating Learning Centres with qualified staff will provide the right setting for many children who need intensive support. This gives students the environment they need to learn while protecting students and staff. I agree that immediate, uncapped counselling must be available for all EAs, teachers, and other staff—as well as students—who experience or witness dysregulated behaviour or violence.

P. Henderson: I asked Facebook friends what the biggest issues are in education. I was shocked. "EAs are leaving in droves because we are abused sometimes daily." "When I left I had a diagnosis of work-related PTSD ... I couldn't function in the daily abuse." "EAs are paid different amounts in each districts even though we are all CUPE.... Chilliwack EAs are making \$5-\$6 less per hour. Practically speaking as a trustee I am not certain what I can do. What I do know I can do is advocate behind the scenes with colleagues at the district and with the provincial government.

S. Hesketh: I would advocate to partner with the BC School Trustees Association to lobby the federal government for more funding for mental health training – expediting the staff that are at highest risk. I would also advocate for simultaneously

reach out to our local MP with the goal of getting him to champion the issue in Ottawa, and/or write a letter of support to the federal Minister of Health.

C. Kruger: In my experience, violence prevention is often related to a child or youth's regulation. I will explore a partnership with MCFD in which Child and Youth Mental Health offer training for interested parents on how to set a child up for success in their day thus allowing the child to come to school as regulated as possible. Additionally, I will advocate for a fully funded school system that can maximize staffing and supports.

D. Ollinger: The school should be equipped with a psychiatrist or guidance councillor to help the students learn self respect and that respect is reciprocal. Placing the problem student(s) in a roll swapping situation wear they directly bear the repercussions of their own actions; and perhaps have intervention with guest speakers from the police department.

W. Reichelt: I believe that we need to do a systemic review of support services in the district. I am a strong advocate for inclusion, and I believe that all students should have access to public education. However, for years we have been reactive rather than proactive in dealing with student dysregulation. Too often, we are expecting EAs, sometimes with little experience, to deal with students who have violent behaviour. Workplace violence shouldn't be something we just accept. I think we need to look at every support we offer and see how we can better support students before problems happen. We need the right people in the right places at the right time so that they can all support each other.

M. Reid: I am grateful to CUPE for bringing your unfiltered concerns about workplace violence to us through partner meetings. I have also had the opportunity to sit in with staff at a challenging site and see the monumental task they face daily. Alongside advocating to higher levels of government for better funding models and more resources I would make student and staff safety a strategic priority, be supportive of innovative solutions, and speak with trustees in other districts about what works for them.

D. Swankey: I'll address when I can with 100 words. Guiding legal documents and principles must be upheld as a starting point in this discussion; WorkSafe practices, and collective agreement obligations are binding, full stop. Workplace safety should be an expectation of every employee. Prioritizing resources to support dysregulated learners is essential. This includes supporting district and school based teams to intervene in exceptional circumstances. It also includes supporting the resources and tools necessary for appropriate learning and working environments. Each situation is unique, reflecting the diversity of need in our community; resolution will differ based on the dynamic of each instance.

B. VanGarderen: I think this is a struggle in many districts as well. This is a tough question to answer because there isn't a one stop fix all solution. First would start by advocating for more funds for undiagnosed students that causes support to be stretched. Looking at how to increase physical spaces as well to provide outlets for students and staff and then investing in training opportunities to help develop strategies as a whole district to create a unified response that is predictable and keeps staff safe.

4. Overcrowding:

- **SD33 continues to experience rapid growth and overcrowding.**
- **What actions would you take to advocate for additional school space, staffing, and resources?**

K. Bartel: Through budget and boundary work, I have seen how often local solutions simply move pressure from one school or budget line to another. Chilliwack cannot solve rapid growth with temporary fixes. I would keep pushing locally to creatively use the resources we have best, while also being a loud and persistent advocate to the province for the space,

staffing, and funding we actually need. That means direct Ministry advocacy, working through BCSTA, and speaking publicly when provincial funding is not keeping up with the reality in our schools.

B. Bednarski: Given the current state of the deficit, I believe it is a certainty that there will be austerity programs put in place in the future. That means there will be more pressure on municipalities to find more funds locally. New schools could be built on a Community Schools model, where facilities and capital funding are pooled with the city, the regional library system and Fraser Health. Spaces and infrastructure would be shared with elder care, library and recreational facilities. Since funding is limited and there could be a further reduction in provincial funding, I would recommend a program to shift administrative staff salaries and personnel to frontline positions.

B. Bouwsema-Cardinal: Address the cycle of "portable management," many portables lack proper HVAC systems, temperature control, force students to walk through freezing weather to use the restroom, and isolate from the main school community. Push the province to fund schools based on actual town growth, instead of waiting until people are already stuck in portables. Additionally, when a district is short-staffed existing teachers and staff carry the load resulting in burnout. My priority will always be protecting the classroom. We need to fix the spending at the school board office first...classroom resources, library books, and learning assistants should be the absolute last things on the chopping block.

M. Carter: On school space, I would advocate for provincial capital funding, especially as it relates to the school site on Promontory Road. Chilliwack is one of the fastest growing areas in Canada, and the board should be advocating for that to be reflected in the province's school expansion program. On staffing and resources, I would push for an operating budget that spends where it measurably improves student learning.

M. Garmon: I will advocate to the province for capital funding that keeps pace with our growth, including construction of the planned 500-seat elementary school on the Promontory site. I also support finishing the East Side Elementary and the Sardis Secondary expansion projects on schedule. While new spaces are being built, we should look carefully at underused district space and practical temporary options. Staffing must keep up with actual enrolment so students receive consistent support that builds strong foundations.

P. Henderson: While not directly a role of a trustee, I do believe advocacy on behalf of the district with the provincial government is important. Cultivating relationships with local MLAs is good, but with 20 years in journalism in the Fraser Valley I know a lot of people from members of the media to former and current elected officials with influence. Advocating more directly with members of the governing party does more than complaining to opposition MLAs. But first, trustees need to tour schools, talk to teachers, to students, to EAs, get a handle on the issue then tell their stories.

S. Hesketh: The first thing that I believe the board needs to do is lobby the Ministry of Education and the Minister of Infrastructure to fully fund the acquisition of the land on Promontory, so we can pay back the \$6.5 million dollar loan. That loan is costing almost \$300,000 in interest annually. That's money that could go to staffing to alleviate some of the pressure. The second thing that needs to happen is the board needs to put together a long term facility plan.

L. Kelley: I recognize and value the important work already underway in SD33 to address the pressure of rapid growth and overcrowding. School Trustees have the opportunity and responsibility to collectively advocate for the needs of their community and as a trustee, I hope to build on that work by advocating for the staffing, resources, and school space, our students need. It is imperative to work with the city, province, First Nations, PACs and DPAC to continue to plan for growth, secure land, expand existing schools, and build new ones where needed. I would also continue to advocate for provincial funding and work to provide the community with updates on enrolment, capacity, staffing pressures and progress on planned solutions.

C. Kruger: SD33 is a fast-growing school district in the province. I will look at current budgets to see if there is any redistribution that may be helpful, and advocate for additional funding. I will also explore if schools could have solar added to their roofs as a way of offsetting operation costs and even be an income generator.

D. Ollinger: To fund additional space, staffing and resources, I would petition the government for additional funding along with endeavor programs to generate capital.

W. Reichelt: When I was elected in 2018, Chilliwack had the most portables per capita in the province. Since then, the board and staff have advocated strongly and successfully for the creation of permanent learning spaces. We have had one new school built (Stitó:s) and one currently under construction (the new Rosedale school) as well as multiple significant additions (GWG, Vedder Elementary, Sardis Secondary, etc.). This is still a high priority for the board, and we will continue to ask for new schools and additions, including a new elementary school on Promontory. In terms of staffing and resources, we will continue to advocate for increased funding, both as a board and as part of BCSTA.

M. Reid: Advocacy for more resources is an important part of the work that a Trustee does. This includes contributing our local voice to regional tables, making motions at BCSTA events that speak to making education a higher government priority, and engaging with our MLA's about this issue. It also helps to forge positive relationships with the City and any other partners that interface with funding that we access. Making gaps clearly known and demonstrating how we can use funds effectively is important to the role, and part of that is empowering staff to share their frontline experiences.

D. Swankey: District infrastructure continues to be a priority. In 2018, Chilliwack had the highest number of portables as a ratio of student population. Despite our growth, we use fewer portables today than we did at that time and we have not purchased a portable over this term, prioritizing dollars in the classroom. We've seen significant capital investment over two-terms including school additions, site acquisitions, and new school-builds; however, continued capital and operational investment is essential. Updating our Long Range Facilities Plan, advancing ambitious Five-Year Capital Plans, and communicating our priorities directly to government is essential to this work.

B. VanGarderen: Looking at other districts to see how they can utilize shorter time frames to develop more spaces and classrooms. Looking at boundaries and areas that could have cross enrollment. Long term plans are key but take a while to get up and running.

5. Meaningful Inclusion:

- Some students require supports that exceed current staffing and resources.
- How would you advocate for meaningful inclusion while ensuring the safety and well-being of SD33 staff?

K. Bartel: Meaningful inclusion starts with actually knowing and understanding the child. Things can fall apart when staff do not have the information, time, or support to understand what a student is communicating. Behaviour is communication, and crisis is often the end result of needs being missed for too long. I would advocate for strength based plans built with families, teachers, EAs, and specialists together, along with the training and preparation time to use them well. Even 15 minutes each day for staff to connect and prepare for the day could make a real difference.

B. Bednarski: Meaningful inclusion for students with very special needs who tend to suffer stigma and resentment when fully mainstreamed because children are highly attentive of and sensitive to difference. These students could be better served by full or part-time education in settings with children with similar needs.

B. Bouwsema-Cardinal: Inclusion not as an ideology, but as a fully supported practice. Meaningful inclusion is impossible if Teachers, Educational Assistants or anyone is burnt out, isolated, or unsafe in any capacity. Inclusive practices require resources, and ideally for the right people to be present at the right time. I will push to eliminate the practice of "EA pooling" where one EA is stretched across too many high-needs students, leaving teachers isolated during a crisis

M. Carter: Achieving meaningful inclusion, staff safety and overall student performance is difficult but extremely important. I'm committed to a) making sure students feel respect and included, b) ensuring staff are safe, respected and properly resourced, and c) ensuring all students are given orderly classrooms so they can thrive to their maximum potential. There's no easy answer for meeting all those objectives. I would want the board to routinely see reports and metrics to ensure those commitments are not out of balance. I would also want to hear from the EAs on how to best achieve those objectives.

M. Garmon: Meaningful inclusion requires a full range of supports. For students needing remedial help, I will advocate for fully staffed Resource Rooms where they can receive targeted instruction to improve their understanding and return to class. For students facing mental health challenges, I support restoring full-time counsellors to schools to ensure consistent, early support. For students with behavioural needs, I support specialized Learning Centres staffed by experts. This ensures high-needs students get care and education geared to their abilities, while keeping classrooms safe and enhancing the well-being of staff.

P. Henderson: This is arguably the most fraught question in education. Every student has a right to an education and to be included. But what happens when one student out of 28 ruins it for the other 27? One BCTF research paper described how teachers support the principle of inclusion while finding themselves caught between that principle and classroom realities. An academic study showed that children with disabilities who spend more time in classrooms with peers can still be marginalized. In other words, physical presence ≠ inclusion. We should look to best practices elsewhere. There are examples in Alberta, Finland, New Zealand.

S. Hesketh: I would push for funding to go toward additional de-escalation training for all staff for the safety and well being for staff. I would also address the EA shortage by strongly advocating for competitive compensation, benefits, and regular hours to attract and retain high-quality support staff in Chilliwack. I realize this is a complicated process, but worth looking into. For meaningful inclusion, I would advocate to optimize the physical environment for diverse needs. Overcrowded classrooms increase stress levels for both staff and students. I would work with the board push the provincial government for capital funding to eliminate portables and reduce class sizes as a direct investment in both meaningful inclusion and workplace well-being.

L. Kelley: There is a currently a risk that it could be assumed or concluded that inclusion is not working, when a lack of support makes it difficult to meaningfully include a student. On the contrary, research overwhelming supports that inclusive practices support all students, not just those with a designation. However, when resources and supports are lacking due to funding shortfalls, the blame for the inadequate system funding is too frequently shifted to the support needs of particular students. As previously stated, School Trustees have the responsibility to collectively advocate for the needs of students, and as a trustee, I hope to build on that work by advocating for the staffing and resources to support every learner.

C. Kruger: Schools need to be fully funded and as such, I will be an advocate for that funding. The province needs to recognize that while education is not directly an income-generating ministry, it is the future of the entire province and deserves investment.

D. Ollinger: Special needs students should have avenue to specific support in the classroom and school environment with specific support from all staff involved with the case; while not asking teachers to supply support paid allocation after the

school day ends as they already take their work home with them ie) grading, so perhaps an after school paid behavior therapy group much like band.

W. Reichelt: As mentioned previously, I believe we need to do a systemic review of support services. We need to look at everything we do and find better ways to support students and staff. The current situation is unsustainable, and I am very concerned that if we don't find better ways to operate, there will be growing calls to re-segregate students with special needs or behavioural challenges.

M. Reid: I think that meaningful inclusion is one of the top issues facing our District, and finding innovative and effective ways to address that will be a challenge. I will encourage change at a system level so that we are not just triaging and reacting. We should be meeting student needs before they dysregulate as much as possible, and have clear pathways to help students get help before it is a continuing issue.

D. Swankey: The goal is simple in principle - what kids need, when they need it. Meaningful inclusion is the practice, but belonging and community is the goal. Advocacy to expand resources, to close gaps in funding, and to support recruitment and retention of front-line workers and specialists is key. This work also requires engaging beyond the public education setting with community agencies and partners. These conversations will be important as MCFD moves forward with significant reforms to their [Child and Youth with Support Needs \(CYSN\) Framework](#), changes I am keenly aware of working with the [FV CDC](#) and the [BCACDI](#).

B. VanGarderen: Fundamentally speaking there is a gap in our system that does not take into account the students who are not yet diagnosed or struggling in school due to exterior factors. To be able to advocate for schools and districts would be the first step I would take to see how we can better support all of our students who are welcome. Setting up intentional support systems and training to help develop staff is another route I would explore to try and build the skill set of many individuals who care deeply about all of our students.

6. Respite:

- Some students are forced to come to school and spend significant time out of the classroom due to violence. This directly puts our members in harms way.
- How would you address this issue?

K. Bartel: This needs a wrap around approach. I have seen what happens when schools are expected to carry needs they simply are not equipped to meet on their own. Staff cannot be the entire mental health, behavioural, and family support system for a child. We need outside professionals, community supports, clear safety planning, and honest limits around what schools can safely provide. We also need to listen to the student. If a child is repeatedly dysregulated in a particular environment, we need to understand why. That does not excuse violence, but understanding the cause can help prevent it.

B. Bednarski: Students are forced to attend school and spend time outside the classroom because the board has undertaken a policy prohibiting the restraint or removal of students acting out dangerously. I would end that policy.

B. Bouwsema-Cardinal: When violence happens, our focus should be on protecting teachers and supporting the student, not just handing out penalties. Insist that a student's transition plan back into a classroom after a violent event must approach from a restorative lens rather than punitive one and actively involve the classroom staff, caregiver and student. Everyone must have a clear say in whether the safety plan is manageable before the student returns to that space. Staff deserve a right to prioritize instruction time and a safe workplace.

M. Carter: Similar to my last answer, there is a real tension between general attendance requirements and managing disruptive behaviour. Ultimately, though, the burden inherent in that tension should not be borne by the EAs. Again, I would want the board to see data on how many students are in that situation and how policies or funding can address it.

M. Garmon: Students who are regularly overstimulated and prone to dysregulation or violence are often the reason that classrooms are evacuated. Such high-needs students would do better if they had access to alternative, structured spaces staffed by educators, who are also behavioural specialists. This would allow them to receive intense support while the rest of the class continues learning. I support transparent incident reporting and safety reviews with union representatives, so patterns can be recognized and addressed, not seen as isolated incidents. I also support pathways to community or medical support when a student's needs exceed what school staff can safely provide.

P. Henderson: It's important for anyone running for office – or who is in office – to recognize when they need to ask questions. This topic is one of those for me. I have no idea what EAs truly face when there is violence in the classroom and a student is removed, nor do I clearly understand district policy when it comes to physically disruptive behaviour. What I do know is that physical touching, even pushing or spitting is assault in the criminal code, which at the very least is something that needs to be explained to all students, parents, teachers, staff.

S. Hesketh: I would request that the Board Chair organize formal meetings with Chilliwack's MLAs to present a unified local voice demanding targeted provincial investments for staff safety. I would also advocate for capital allocations within the local budget to outfit specialized sensory and alternate spaces in the district's most overcrowded schools. Kids need to feel safe to de-escalate. The first thing we can do for everyone involved, is to get them to a safe space.

L. Kelley: Although there may be contexts where it benefits a student to have a quiet space to co-regulate with support for a specific period of time, spending significant time in a secluded environment is not meaningful inclusion. It is important to seek to explore/understand what might be underlying the behaviours the student is demonstrating from the student's perspective, and to consider factors like unmet needs, sensory or stress responses, etc. There are many strategies and approaches that might be explored, but I also understand that this is another example of the complexity in seeking to support all learners in a system that is chronically under-resourced. From a Trustee perspective, it's important to ask: how are our policies, decisions, staffing levels and resources allowing every student to access education fairly and without discrimination?

C. Kruger: I am curious if additional training may help. Such examples include managing escalating behaviour, regulation in children and youth, PDA Autism, and trauma and its impact of children and youth. I will make enquiries as to the viability of hiring more staff, including more Educational Assistants (EAs) and Child and Youth Workers (CYWs). Reducing or eliminating single-worker isolation may help and I would advocate for that. Staff need to be provided with risk assessments, behaviour plans, safety protocols, and transparent communication regarding students with a history of violent incidents.

D. Ollinger: For problematic violent behaviour, the teacher should first have the principal or guidance councillor to intervene, either as expulsion or a suspension warning and recommend behaviour therapy promoting self respect to the antagonist and with respect in general. Additionally, support for the victim(s) should be established with intervention from all staff involved in addition to peer support to those who can not defend themselves helping them to cope; as there is power in numbers.

W. Reichelt: Meaningful inclusion doesn't necessarily mean that a student needs to be in the classroom at all times. Some students need to be regulated before they can meaningfully participate in the classroom. We often do not have good

systems for these students, so we are putting them in classrooms until they melt down and then expecting EAs to deal with the aftermath. I believe the systemic review that I mentioned previously would help us find new solutions.

M. Reid: One thing that our system can do better is to work to stop students from escalating to the point of needing to leave a classroom, but we also need supports in place to keep child, class, and staff safe once it reaches that point. From a governance lens I would like to see changes made to the system so that we have a consistent approach across schools, while at the same time recognizing that every child is different and continuity of care is especially important for children with complex needs. Staff should have a clear pathway to safe resolution for every situation.

D. Swankey: Guiding legal documents and principles must be upheld as a starting point in this discussion; WorkSafe practices, and collective agreement obligations are binding, full stop. The district also has a duty of care for every child and this obligation can't be ignored. There are no easy answers, and 100 words won't address the dynamic and nuance of this discussion. With the above noted, prioritizing resources to support dysregulated learners is essential. This includes supporting district and school based teams to intervene in exceptional circumstances. It also includes supporting the resources and tools necessary to support appropriate learning and working environments.

B. VanGarderen: There is not an easy answer to this question. There are many factors that influence and affect these students and without having the full picture of why they are spending significant time out to the classroom I do not feel like I can address this issue. I would first ask the current leaders what systems they have in place to address these major concerns from a school and district level.

7. Marginalized Groups:

- Some CUPE members experience discrimination, harassment, or hate-based behaviour from students, parents, guardians, and/or members of the public.
- What role should Trustees play in promoting a respectful and inclusive workplace?
- How will you ensure that your personal views on sexual orientation do not conflict with or override established Human Rights Codes with respect to our membership's safety, student safety, curriculum?

K. Bartel: Discrimination and harassment should never be accepted as part of the job. People feel unsupported when expectations are vague or when there is no clear follow through. Trustees need to make sure policy gives staff real protection, clear boundaries, and a clear response when those boundaries are crossed. Those policies should be shaped with input from the people affected by them. Trustees also set the tone through how we speak at the board table, in committees, in public, and on social media. My personal views do not conflict with Human Rights Codes. Human rights are not optional, and trustees do not get to reinterpret them based on personal beliefs. Staff and students deserve to know that their rights, safety, and dignity will be protected. Full stop.

B. Bednarski: I believe trustees must lead by example in promoting an inclusive workplace, not disparaging anyone based on race, religion, sexual orientation, age or sex.

I am not a fan of so-called 'stakeholder consultation' as it tends to obscure and silence the diversity of opinion. Perhaps the best way for any CUPE member to engage with the board is to be welcomed, along with other community members to be present at school board meetings.

B. Bouwsema-Cardinal: A school district cannot cultivate a healthy learning environment for students if it maintains a poor working environment for adults. A trustee's leadership is significant to building a stable, safe work environment. As trustee, I will lead by example with civility, I will ensure policies fiercely protect staff from harassment internally or from the public

and support budget allocations for mandatory, high-quality professional development regarding anti-racism, truth and reconciliation, and LGBTQ2S+ inclusion for all district staff, including management. The teachings and heart do not align with violating human rights but additionally, when I take the oath of office as a school trustee, my primary allegiance is to the School Act and the BC Human Rights Code. The recent landmark Human Rights Tribunal ruling right here in Chilliwack made it undeniably clear that public officials are accountable for protecting their staff from discrimination and an abusive or unsafe work environment. My personal views will never override my statutory duty to ensure that every student is safe, every teacher is respected, and the provincially mandated curriculum is delivered with integrity.

M. Carter: First, the trustees should lead by example by being respectful amongst each other, with the district staff, with students and with the public. They should advocate for a high standard of respect, and be clear that discrimination, harassment and hate-based behaviour are not acceptable within the district. My views are consistent with the Human Rights Code. I don't believe anyone should be discriminated against due to a protected characteristic.

M. Garmon: Trustees must ensure every staff member works in a safe environment, free from bullying, harassment, and discrimination. I will advocate for clear policies that require all incidents to be reported and investigated fairly and promptly, regardless of who is involved. The BC Human Rights Code is the current law. It protects everyone in our schools, including CUPE members and students. My personal views on sexual orientation will not override the Code, membership safety, student safety, or the curriculum set by the province. I support the provincial fundamentals of education—and the requirement that every student succeeds to their potential. Trustees vote on resources, not curriculum. I will work with the majority to ensure resources support safe, respectful learning environments.

P. Henderson: Trustees can't directly get involved in personnel/labour issues in the workplace, but they can advocate where appropriate. More simply, they should model good behaviour at the board table and in communications, both public and private. We have seen this in the negative in recent tumultuous years where trustees bring their religious ideology to the board table, share bigoted opinions on social media, even participate in hateful protests on the streets. Trustees need to show respect to one another, even those with very different views, follow the Trustee Code of Ethics, and show respect for district staff at all times. I guess I'm lucky since my personal views on sexual orientation align perfectly with the B.C. Human Rights Code. No member of the LGBTQ community should ever feel unsafe, uncomfortable, unwelcome in any way in any school or district setting of any kind. Any anti-LGBTQ behaviour is unacceptable and should be addressed immediately.

S. Hesketh: As a trustee, I would ask the board's policy committee to look at districts like Surrey (SD36) or Central Okanagan (SD23), which have established clear public boundaries. SD23 has successfully empowered its front-line workers to protect their own psychological safety. Because the Board of Education has legally vetted and fully backed this framework, school principals there, feel confident enforcing boundaries, knowing that if they issue a warning or property ban, the school board will support their decision. I will fully back the district's safety rules to protect staff from any hate-based behavior, whether it comes from inside the school or from a hostile member of the public. The B.C. Human Rights Code makes it illegal to discriminate against anyone because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. As a trustee, I have a legal duty to follow this rule. Every time I vote on a policy or a budget, the law comes first, period. Student safety is also non-negotiable, and I will support the programs and clubs that keep the kids safe. As a trustee, my job is to make sure our teachers have the resources, books, and support they need to teach the official B.C. curriculum.

L. Kelley: My personal views align with BC's established Human Rights Codes. School Trustees are bound by the School Act which, in alignment with the Human Rights Code, supports the human rights of all. To specifically address curriculum, this is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, and thus falls outside the mandate of a School Trustee. I can state with confidence that I can differentiate between diverse opinions, and bigoted positions that seek to take rights away from

certain groups or people, which is not acceptable. I am committed to operating with integrity and grace, while ensuring that employees, students, and others feel safe and welcomed.

C. Kruger: Trustees are part of a public body and as such are accountable to the community they serve. Trustees need to ensure the framework and policies they set are congruent to the goals and values the Ministry of Education and Child Care sets. I will be professional, respectful, empathetic and open-minded. I have no personal views in conflict with anything in the Human Rights Code. I am a passionate supporter of inclusivity, safe spaces and diversity.

D. Ollinger: Trustees should agree on a code of conduct that is established on respect and dignity much like Thomas Jefferson's work on natural rights, or as Sting professes in his song 'Russians', "we share the same biology regardless of ideology."

W. Reichelt: Trustees must model respectful and inclusive behaviour. It is extremely important that trustees continue to support policies and strategic priorities that recognize human rights. I believe in taking a zero-tolerance approach to discriminatory language when conducting board business, and I'm proud of the fact that I never allowed members of the public to use our meetings to share hateful comments when I was board chair. My personal views on sexual orientation are in alignment with the Human Rights Code. Our staff, students and families deserve to be included and respected regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. In addition, students deserve to see themselves and their families represented in learning and library resources. Any book banning efforts should be strongly rejected by the board.

M. Reid: Respectful workplaces must be modeled from the top, and as a trustee it is my job to not only be a safe employer, but to hold my colleagues accountable when they are not doing so. It is also important to make sure that our values of inclusion and safety are reflected in guiding documents, and that there are consequences for those who make others unsafe. I know my role as a Trustee, I understand the Human Rights Code, I uphold our Trustee Code of Conduct, and I practice lifelong learning about my own privileges and blindspots. If you do these things, it is easy to stay in your lane and not negatively impact staff or students. Curriculum is not my job. The Human Rights Code is above my authority. I will respect these truths, and be sure to hold my colleagues accountable to them as well. If I make a mistake, I will apologize and then bear the consequences and listen so I may learn how to do better the next time.

D. Swankey: While Boards of Education are responsible for district governance, they work within a defined legal framework including the BC Human Rights Code. Where trustees cross legal boundaries, they jeopardize the position of the board and the position of the district, diverting significant time and resources into a legal quagmire. The board has significant impact on district culture, meaning individual trustees may help or harm. My record over two terms speaks for itself; I work thoughtfully to uphold the dignity of the board and to model the conduct we hope to see from leaders in a healthy and flourishing community.

B. VanGarderen: Trustees set policy and guidelines for the district. A big one is how to provide a safe, caring and inclusive environment for all students and staff. It can be a challenge when working with some of the community members. It is important to try and figure out systems and communication structures to help reduce the amount CUPE members must communicate with individuals and members of the public. There is and should be no tolerance for discrimination, harassment, or hate base behavior directed at staff. We expect staff to teach everyone with respect and expect that in return from our parents, guardians and members of the public. My personal views are that every student belongs in school and representation and safe spaces to learn are key to building a strong, healthy community.

8. Collaboration:

- How would you ensure that CUPE members have meaningful opportunities to share concerns and perspectives with the Board?
- Do you support meeting with CUPE Local 411 Executive Board, outside of formal partnership meetings, to better understand workplace issues affecting our members?
- Why or why not?

K. Bartel: Yes and I have many times. I think both spaces matter. Formal meetings are important for business, accountability, and having things on the record. Informal conversations create a different kind of space where people are often more comfortable talking honestly about what is happening day to day. I have learned a lot through those conversations because they help me understand not just the issue, but how it is actually affecting people. I would continue making myself available in both ways.

B. Bednarski: I am not a fan of so-called 'stakeholder consultation' as it tends to obscure and silence the diversity of opinion. Perhaps the best way for any CUPE member to engage with the board is to be welcomed, along with other community members to be present at school board meetings.

B. Bouwsema-Cardinal: Work with senior staff to schedule regular board site visits. When visiting a school, make a point to step out of the principal's office to speak with the custodian, school secretaries, and EAs in the hallways. Hearing concerns in the actual workplace environment bridges the gap between boardroom policy and frontline reality. Formal board packages and official committee meetings only tell part of the story. I want to meet with the CUPE members because they represent the people on the absolute front lines of our schools. I want to listen without the constraints of an official agenda to what your members need to feel safe, respected, and supported at work, so I can ensure those realities inform and are reflected in my platform and my governance.

M. Carter: Yes. I believe the board should listen well and widely to understand the issues affecting the district. That being said, I believe that decisions of the board should be open and transparent, so I don't support decisions being made until the issues are discussed publicly at a board meeting, and the board has heard from the public on an agenda item.

M. Garmon: I want CUPE members to have real chances to raise concerns outside formal public meetings. I'd support regular private conversations where union reps and frontline staff can speak openly about day-to-day issues. I also support creating an independent District Ombudsperson. That would give staff a confidential, safe channel for issues that can't be resolved through normal processes, without fear of retaliation. Yes, I would meet with the CUPE Local 411 Executive outside formal partner meetings. Those informal talks are a good way to fully understand safety concerns, staffing gaps, and workplace pressures before crises erupt.

P. Henderson: These three questions feel like they need one answer, so this might be longer than 100 words.

I strongly believe that Chilliwack School Board trustees need to both spend more time directly meeting with CUPE and CTA members and visiting school sites while also interfering less in the day-to-day activities of those dedicated to educating our children and supporting our school facilities. Again, maintain the train tracks, don't play with the trains. As I would be a newcomer to the board, I'm not familiar with what already takes place, but it seems like a no-brainer to me for at least a couple of trustees as a consultation team to have regular meetings (maybe public but more likely in camera) with CUPE representatives to discuss issues, problems, complaints, suggestions regarding topics in the board's purview. This could coincide with occasional tours of a school or two led by union reps to see Local 411 members in the workplace and what they face and where.

S. Hesketh: I would strongly support and prioritize attendance at the Joint Occupational Health and Safety (JOHS) Committee. I would also work to ensure the board meetings are welcoming to CUPE members to speak directly to the Board during a public meeting. I do support meeting with the executive board outside of partner meetings to better understand workplace issues. The more we understand, the more effective solutions we can come up with. If our educators and support staff are happy and healthy, that is going to positively impact the entire school community. If we only talk at formal meetings a few times a year, we are always reacting to problems. Meeting informally helps us spot issues early so we can fix them through the budget before they turn into major crises.

L. Kelley: As a school Trustee it is important to build relationships and collaborate with groups such as school employees (CUPE/CTA) and that means being willing to attend partner meetings to understand varying perspectives and experiences. These are critical opportunities to build a depth of understanding that will help guide making informed decisions regarding policy, and other issues of governance.

C. Kruger: I am supportive of meetings outside of formal partner meetings for informal discussions, problem solving and clarifications. Transparency in both bodies is essential and must not undermine the overall goals. They also cannot be used to bypass formal processes.

D. Ollinger: Although meeting with CUPE members outside of formal meetings might sound appealing with regards to the welfare of the students, bringing work home after being on the clock might be a concern for expected demands on the members as affected, in addition to the homework teachers' already have like grading papers and preparing curriculum.

W. Reichelt: I am open to having conversations at any time, with the caveat that I can only listen. Individual trustees cannot make promises, as all decisions are made by the board as a whole. The advantage of formal meetings and emails to the whole board is that all trustees get the same information at the same time. This ensures that when we are faced with a decision, we are all working with the same information.

M. Reid: I can support it to some degree because partner group meetings are what we have created for learning and sharing, but those meetings should be a living process that serves both parties instead of a ticky-box exercise. I think that meetings outside of the formal partner ones could potentially be approached thoughtfully and constructively, but it would need to be done mindfully, with consideration that all partner groups get similar access and supports from the Board.

D. Swankey: First, I appreciate CUPE 411's current work to engage the board directly; this includes partner meetings, contributions to board and district committees, email correspondence, and participation in public meetings. As a trustee, I am present in schools and in community. I'm available and responsive, approaching every discussion with respect to support the integrity of the board. I welcome any conversation. I also recognize an obligation to support productive outcomes that engage the whole of the board and include staff overseeing district operations. If the board wants to accomplish something, it must engage the staff that are implementing that direction.

B. VanGardenen: I support it because CUPE members are often the front lines when working with complex students. Sometimes it is easy to overlook the work they do but I feel that without our support staff there would be many buildings and students who would suffer. Being heard and having a voice is important for developing well thought out and inclusive practices.

9. Labour Relations:

- What do you believe is the Trustee's role in supporting a respectful and productive relationship between the Board and CUPE Local 411?

K. Bartel: I think the Trustee's role is to be available, responsive, and willing to listen even when the conversation is difficult. Trustees should be in regular communication, both formally and informally, and following through when concerns are raised. I have learned through my work with different partner groups that trust is built by showing up, listening without immediately becoming defensive, being honest about what you can and can't do, and then doing the work you said you would do.

B. Bouwsema-Cardinal: I believe ensuring that support staff are treated as equal partners in education, not subordinate line items should be of a high priority. I also believe it is a Trustee responsibility to hold the superintendent accountable to promoting a culture of collaboration and early prevention before grievances escalate.

M. Carter: As answered above, I believe the board should advocate for a high level of respect amongst all relationships within the district. I also believe that any issues in the relationship should be addressed directly, not through public comments.

M. Garmon: My role, as a trustee would be to treat CUPE as a true partner, not an adversary. A respectful relationship means recognizing that staff safety is not a bargaining chip. I will work to ensure the Board approaches every issue with transparency and good faith. Productive labour relations need open communication. I will listen to CUPE's concerns and support policies that protect our workforce. When we work together, we can solve problems quickly instead of letting conflict or mistrust slow everything down.

P. Henderson: The above questions essentially answers this. There should be one or two or more trustees who regularly meet with a couple of CUPE Local 411 reps who then report back to the full Board and union membership, respectively.

S. Hesketh: A trustee's role is to make sure CUPE members feel heard at the board table, safe in their workplaces, and respected in the budget. When workers are supported, the entire school district runs better.

L. Kelley: It is critical that trustees listen to and seek to understand concerns raised by CUPE and its members as it affects their employment, and also advocate for fair working conditions, adequate staffing, employee safety and respectful workplaces, while respecting collective bargaining and the Board's governance role. This can occur during informal and/or regular organized meetings with CUPE representatives and Trustees.

C. Kruger: I believe a Trustee's role is to be a good and empathetic listener who takes the time to understand the challenges, demands, and concerns faced by CUPE staff in their important and often difficult work. I would bring that understanding and perspective to the development of policies and to my advocacy as a Trustee.

D. Ollinger: Genuine concern for the well being of both the trustees and the CUPE members issues being resolved on mutual concern with respect for each of the parties concerned. Specific focus should be placed on the concerns affecting the students and their parents.

W. Reichelt: I believe that all board members should support free and fair collective bargaining. We should encourage our bargaining team to work collaboratively with CUPE rather than treating negotiations as adversarial.

M. Reid: I believe each Trustee's relationship with CUPE should begin with the way they speak about their role in the District (which should be done with respect,) and with how the trustee engages in public dialogue around bargaining. Trustees should not undermine public confidence in our relationship or the process that governs it. Aside from that, making an effort to attend partner meetings and learning sessions should be done to show a commitment to understanding. Any concerns that are raised to the Board should be considered when making decisions.

D. Swankey: These seems obvious, but honesty and integrity are essential to respectful working relationships. I would add, being prepared by doing your homework, and showing up when invited. Partner meetings, board and district committees, email correspondence, and meetings of the board in public are venues where the board interacts directly with CUPE 411; upholding these or similar practices is also part of supporting that productive relationship. While the relationship rest with the full board, individual members have positions that influence this dynamic. I model kindness and respect in my approach with all partners and my record speaks for itself here.

B. VanGarderen: To listen and hear about the concerns that are going on in the school system to better support students in Chilliwack.

10. Bargaining Support:

- During collective bargaining, Trustees ultimately help shape the district's approach to labour relations.
- What principles would guide your support for fair and respectful bargaining with CUPE Local 411?

K. Bartel: I believe both sides of the table ultimately want strong public schools, even when the pressures and priorities are different. One of my campaign pillars is partnership, and to me that means listening carefully, being honest about constraints, and staying at the table when conversations are difficult. Through years of advocacy I have learned that relationships matter most when there is disagreement. Fair bargaining also means recognizing the value of CUPE staff and the essential work they do every day to keep schools running and students supported.

B. Bednarski: Currently, local bargaining takes place at the provincial level, remote from both the board and Local 411. I would seek to change that and bring bargaining back home. As a former teacher, I have been on the other side of the bargaining process so I am sympathetic to labour's concerns.

B. Bouwsema-Cardinal: I'm not a corporate executive, and I'm not a politician. I come from a working-class background and I know what it means to work for a meal. That shapes my entire view of bargaining. To me, a collective agreement isn't a corporate contract to be minimized...it's a promise of safety, fair pay, and dignity for the people who keep our schools running. My guiding principles are simple: a fair day's pay for a hard day's work, absolute honesty at the table, and ensuring that the safety of our front-line staff is never sacrificed for a budget line.

M. Carter: Similar to my answer above, I would advocate for a high level of respect and confidentiality in the bargaining process, not airing disputes publicly, but dealing with the disputed issues directly and fairly.

M. Garmon: I have great respect for the work that CUPE members do in support of our community. My principles are straightforward: safety first, strong benefits, and fair pay. I will support bargaining that is open and done in good faith. The agreements we reach need to match the real demands of the job — including the impact of workplace violence and the need for solid mental health supports — so staff can keep schools safe and running properly.

P. Henderson: I've not been on the board nor a district employee. I have been both a member of a union and a manager overseeing union bargaining unit members in my career. I have, however, never been involved in bargaining on either side of a union labour situation so a nuanced opinion on this would not be particularly informed or useful. I do however, believe strongly in the importance of unions, collective bargaining, and the rights of workers to demand fair wages, and reasonable and safe working conditions.

S. Hesketh: I would use 3 principles to guide my support for fair and respectful bargaining with Cupe Local 411. 1. Collective bargaining works best when there are no secrets. Both sides should come to the table with clear data, honest intentions, and a shared goal of finding solutions. 2. Value the front-line workers, with a contract that addresses the actual conditions that the support staff face daily. 3. Keeping negotiations at the table and treating union leadership as equal, professional partners

L. Kelley: Trustees have a responsibility to be informed regarding what is being discussed and negotiated at the bargaining table. As well, it is important to understand that information from provincial groups does not always reflect what is happening at the local table. While trustees are not directly involved in the bargaining, they ultimately need to have an understanding of the issues and how these will affect the employees and the district.

C. Kruger: I have been a BCGEU member for 35 years and I welcome and understand the benefits of being part of collective bargaining. I have not been part of a bargaining committee but certainly have participated in union activism. The principles I would apply are mutual respect and professionalism, treating others with dignity and equality, timely responses and following through when I agree to do anything. Being an active and empathetic listener, I will be fair and transparent, flexible and objective rather than reacting emotionally.

D. Ollinger: If not mutually compliant, then mediation regarding the issues of concern.

W. Reichelt: Bargaining should be a process where both sides are working toward a common goal: Staff who feel respected and want to come to work. It shouldn't be seen as a negotiation with winners and losers.

M. Reid: First off, I was (until very recently) a CUPE member myself through my last employer. I believed strongly in the work our local did and took part in the process as much as I could. I have utmost respect for fair and respectful bargaining and that would be reflected in the questions I ask, the decisions I would make, and the way I would engage with the process.

D. Swankey: The Board delegates one of their members to serve as BCPSEA Representative. There is no incumbent trustee with experience as BCPSEA Rep; with that in mind, I believe it is essential the next board have someone committed to the position, committed to the learning necessary to support the role, and committed to doing the work of informing the board and providing input to BCPSEA on behalf of the Board of Education. With that in place, part of fair and respectful bargaining is upholding the integrity of the bargaining process and keeping conversations at the bargaining table and in confidence.

B. VanGarderen: Bargaining is not an easy task. There are expectations, wants and needs by both parties. The goal is to do what is best for our students and if we can keep that in mind when negotiating it is important to keep lines of communication open.

Please note that each candidate's answers were copied and pasted into this document.

Spelling, grammar and punctuation were not corrected.

END OF DOCUMENT