

OSSTF DISTRICT 10

Lambton Kent District School Board Trustee Candidate Questionnaire

Q1: If elected as school trustee, identify your top three (3) priorities and explain their importance.

A1:

- a) What immediately strikes me, is the lack of satisfactory scoring in the EQAO local results for the students seen in our school board area. I know we can't take the results seen in the EQAO results in isolation, but it does show an alarming trend in the areas of reading, writing and mathematics. This isn't a strictly secondary school issue, the roots of this problematic outcome are planted in elementary schools. Changes will need to be implemented at that level before the positive results will be seen in our secondary schools. Superintendent Hazzard has noted that currently teachers are providing a blended approach, utilizing both conceptual understanding as well as fundamental processes utilized in mathematical concepts.
- b) Overcapacity of "open" space in both elementary and secondary schools. With the current government now in place, they will be looking at every opportunity in not only reducing cost, but also directing funds where they will feel positive results will take place. They will continue to fund students, but I feel they will seek continual rationalization of school properties and to "right size" schools for optimum student performance and funding. The school board will need to have proper student and citizen interaction to gather ideas on this issue. We need to make sure schools and classes are of the proper capacity, so that all students are offered programs that match their needs and interest.
- c) With the focus of the provincial government on making changes to several of the current curriculums, (sex education, reading, writing and mathematics), it will be more important then ever to promote communication amongst all parties. This would include, teaching staff, school boards, administration, parents and concerned citizens and the provincial government. Also discuss local initiatives, such as financial literacy and the instruction of CPR in Health classes. With this in mind, I would prefer to see more meetings with these parties either in town hall format or whatever structure makes the most sense.

Q2: What would you do if you believed the provincial government's policies and actions were negatively affecting education in your community?

A2:

There are specific actions that can be taken by the school board if we are made aware of concerns as it pertains with provincial government's policies and actions. After information gathering, the board could bring forward a motion for the board to debate and vote on. If passed, I would assume a letter is composed on behalf of the school board, outlining our concerns and sent to all relevant parties (Minister of Education). I believe there are approximately 31 school boards that belong to the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA). This is the advocacy group for all the Public School Boards, so that our concerns are addressed with the government of the day.

I have had the advantage of being on the Board of Directors of Bluewater Health for the previous 8 years, holding the position of Chairman for the previous 2 years. I do know that all ministries attention to what makes it to the local news media. I am also a big believer in forming relationships with local members of government for moments like this. While at Bluewater Health, we tried to form 2 way forms of communication with all elected officials. I do know that governments do listen to what is happening in local communities.

But underlining everything, is having the intestinal fortitude to talk to the government and actually having a worthwhile conversation.

Q3: What relationship do you want with the employees/their unions?

A3: If would have to be a positive relationship, with respect for all parties and to work in a collaborative manner. At the same time, we must ensure we are providing the necessary resources to the children of Lambton Kent, so they can achieve their full potential according to their abilities, talents and interest. This will only happen if we are all moving in the same direction with a common goal in mind. To provide the best education by educators having the resources available so they can do what they do best, educate.

Q4: What kinds of support staff and programs do you feel are essential to meet the needs of children with specials needs? What steps would you take to ensure these supports are provided?

A4: Our focus should be on Equity and Inclusion for all students. It would only be right to provide the resources needed for these guiding principles. This could take the form of more resource support, advanced and appropriate training, and possibly more E.A.'s. But this also should include safe work and education environment. Students will not learn, if they are concerned with their physical well-being, nor can we expect educator's to discharge their duties while they also feel unsafe.

We need to make sure funding is there for the important programs, therefore, as a board we need to look at all areas that we have dominion over. Another reason to look at utilization of our current hard assets. But, we also need to focus and make sure we have the relationships with the governments of the day so they value our feedback and input.

Q5: What strategies would you use to recruit new teachers for local employment opportunities?

A5: It is my understanding that not only are provincial school boards having increasingly difficult times in staffing for our own needs, but we are also having school boards coming from outside the province. As a local board, we could look at some of the areas that we can have responsibilities for. Class sizes, days off (with reason) and potentially assisting with cost for educator's to obtaining their Master's in Education or other relevant areas. But we also need to attend Recruitment Days at some or all of the Teachers Colleges. We need to make this a district where educators want to come. We need to become their first choice.

WAYNE L. PEASE