

Your Name: Keith Redl

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Brief biographical statement:

I married my High School sweetheart, Laura, in 1979. We have four adult sons, three married, and 5 grandchildren. I became a licensed welder after high school then joined the RCMP in 1981. My career took us to 10 different communities in three provinces. I had a varied career with 16 years being a manager. As part of my career I conducted audits and evaluations of programs, policies, procedures, detachments and specialized units. As practicing Catholics my wife and I have been involved with marriage preparation since 1993 and I have been a member of the Knights of Columbus since 1984.

Questions:

1. What would you want to be the three priority areas of focus for the school board once elected.

Quality of education is my number one priority. While admittedly the PAT only measures one aspect of education, the number of students achieving the acceptable standard on PAT's and the number of students achieving an acceptable level on the diploma exams has been declining. The decline could be caused by large class sizes, lack of Educational Assistants, school overcrowding, family stress or a combination of any. It is incumbent upon the board and Superintendent to explore possible causes for the declines and do whatever we can to address the issues so that our students are better positioned to embrace future possibilities. Budgeting and timing of school repairs and upgrades would be my next priorities.

2. What are your views on education funding in Alberta and especially your view of the school board's role in making funding decisions?

I feel education funding is inadequate. Children are our future and we seem to be heading down the road to mediocracy. Our schools are overcrowded and class sizes are increasing. This also increases the number of special needs children in classes, without enough Education Assistants. Our board and Superintendent can lobby the Provincial Government for more funds, but ultimately once a decision has been made, we have to work with the funds we are allotted. Budgeting needs to be an evolving process throughout the year and funds that are not fenced need to be reallocated to address the basics, without the goal of a surplus.

3. Our district currently has a very large surplus and growing needs in our classrooms. What would you do to ensure that education dollars are spent in the classrooms rather than accumulated as a surplus?

This ties in with question one and two. I believe budgeting is extremely important and needs to be fluid where possible. I know from my experience as a manager in a government organization that at times money received from government is designated for a specific purpose and cannot be spent on other areas (fenced). However, budgets are anticipated expenditures based on historical data, and future wants and needs. During the course of a year, unanticipated events can change where funds are required. Those funds that aren't fenced should be utilized and not left stagnant to end up as a surplus.

4. What are your views about appropriate use of technology in school?

I'm a pretty tech-savvy individual so my opinion of what is appropriate would likely be different than others. However, I think all parents and teachers can agree that we are living in an age where technology is involved to some degree in all aspects of our lives, schooling included. Anyone that has purchased a consumer electronic device knows that most are out of date as soon as it arrives from the manufacturer. If there is a technological means to relieve some of the burden of large class sizes or lack of EAs, or would help with declining academic levels, that should be pursued.

5. How can we make our schools the safest and most-welcoming possible environments for all students, including sexual and gender minority students? What are your views about Gay-Straight Alliances and the issue of parent notification?

As a retired police officer I dedicated my life to making communities safe. We as board members, teachers, parents and students must remember that this is a Catholic School District. Our faith and religion are paramount in our children's education. We are guided and bound by the Church's direction in this and other areas. Because we are funded by the Provincial Government we are also bound by their policies if we wish to continue to exist and need to strike an acceptable balance. I feel very strongly that parent notification is a must.

6. What will you do to make Grande Prairie Catholic schools an even better place for students to receive their education?

I know from experience that our teachers are dedicated to their students. They are our front line that knows what is taking place in the classroom and what needs to be done to make our education system better. I feel there needs to be more dialogue between the teachers and the board and more input from the teachers in setting direction and budgeting. I would like to see some teacher committees such as a technology committee, possibly a policy committee or budgeting priority committee. The recommendations from the committees would then be considered when the board is making decisions and they would be more informed decisions.

7. What will you do to make Grande Prairie Catholic schools an even better place for employees to work?

One of the Board's responsibilities is to ensure the teachers and staff have the training and tools they need to do their job properly, safely and efficiently. Staff rooms separated from students are essential, teachers and staff need a moment of respite from prying eyes and ears. I know remuneration is an ongoing issue for teachers. I don't feel Board members or the Superintendent should be receiving salary increases when teachers are being told there is no money for them. I believe my answers to all of the above questions will help to make our schools a more enjoyable work environment.