

2026 School District Trustee Candidate Questionnaire

Core Responsibilities

- **Set Strategic Direction:** Create multi-year strategic plans and policies that guide student learning and district priorities.
- **Manage Finances:** Approve annual operating budgets and capital plans to ensure public funds support student success.
- **Hire Leadership:** Appoint and evaluate the school district superintendent (or chief executive officer).
- **Represent the Community:** Listen to local families, taxpayers, and Indigenous communities, bringing their concerns to the board table.

Questions: **Candidate for Trustee - Richard Gauthier**

1. What are your 3 main reasons for running for School Trustee?
(on top of having 2 grandchildren in our elementary schools!)
 - a. *Funding and Advocacy*
 - i. *Per-student funding remains one of the most important issues facing public education. As a Trustee, I will work collectively with the Board to advocate for stronger funding solutions that give students and staff the resources and support they need. We need to see per student funding at least match the rate of inflation each year, plus the top up grants increased at least matching the rate of inflation at a minimum!*
 - b. *Belonging and Safety*
 - i. *Every student should feel that they belong. I will work collaboratively with the board and partner groups to help foster schools where students, families, staff and community members feel safe, welcome and heard.*
 - c. *Transparency and Accountability*
 - i. *Families, employees and our community deserve clear and timely communication. I believe that all trustees should be approachable, visible and willing to listen, explain the process and help connect families with the appropriate support.*
2. Do you support the replacement of RMS? Many new schools have been built and others renovated to accommodate more students while Rutland Middle School, that is now over 70 years old, has only been renovated. What efforts would you make as a Trustee to have Rutland Middle School replaced rather than 'renovated'? If so, how is this going to be achieved?

RMS at well over 70 years old is one of the oldest school facilities in our district. The past board of trustees have been dealing with the issue of a replacement vs. renovation/addition to RMS for two decades. Central Okanagan School District (SD23) has discussed and lobbied for a replacement or major upgrade for Rutland Middle School for more than 18 to 20 years, having listed it as a top capital priority in its plans since at least 2009 (and actively pursuing provincial funding for roughly two decades)

While I wish the province would prioritize a new school replacement for RMS, sadly, we know this is not the case, unless we get an assurance from the new provincial government that will be elected in October. The current school board has placed RMS

as a # 1 priority for a major renovation and new addition to the school. This scenario, while not meeting the desire of the community for a new school, does fit the projection of receiving funding approval from the province in a more timely fashion to renovate the existing structure (including the addition of an elevator and making the washrooms more accessible for students with diverse abilities) AND allow for the building a new addition that can meet the needs of the school community and reduce the use of portables for students.

As a retired school district employee who has spent time working at RMS, I know the struggles of this aging school. Desire for a new school versus the practicalities of working with the Provincial government is the fine line all trustees will have to walk.

3. Are you in favour of better administration of the rules around EV bikes and scooters?

SD23 as part of our shared commitment to student safety and well-being currently supports safe travel for all students to and from school. The school district encourages all families to be aware of the provincial regulations regarding the use of EV bikes and E scooters. Generally, riders are supposed to be a minimum age of 16 years, (14 years for certain ebikes.) Unfortunately, we are all aware that in the city of Kelowna, many riders do not fit these age restrictions. Given the rise in serious injuries to young riders across BC, I would be in favour of our future board of trustees initiating a study to determine if the school district should implement its own more stringent rules on use of motorized personal transportation on school sites ahead of the provincial government's 7 year study.

4. Are you aware of the traffic jams on Rutland road as a result of uncontrolled crossing at RMS? If so what are your plans to alleviate the jams?

5. We understand that bullying has become a major issue within School District #23 (Central Okanagan) resulting in some parents removing their child(ren) from one school and placing them in another or even resorting to homeschooling. What would you do to help ensure that the 0 Tolerance Policy is enforced throughout the school district and that victims are heard and not punished for standing up for themselves?

The role of School Trustees is not the management of schools or district employees. School based issues are the responsibility of the school principal. Our administrators follow the policies that the Board of Trustees have implemented. When dealing with bullying within our school district, trustees need to make sure that our policies follow transparent accountability measures, clear reporting pathways, and restorative frameworks that distinguish self-defense from aggression. As an Indigenous person, I believe in restorative justice that follows a holistic approach to healing and accountability. As our district continues its pursuit of truth and reconciliation, I will

encourage the board to implement indigenous ways of doing as policy and common practice, especially when it comes to bullying and restoring relationships.

6. Too often we hear that students with exceptional needs are not being allowed on school field trips because the support is not there. What efforts would you make as a Trustee to ensure that all students are able to participate equally?

Before I retired from the School District, students that I worked with who had exceptional needs were always made welcome on our field trips. As a Trustee I would encourage any parent whose child wasn't allowed on a field trip because of a lack of support, to contact the board as a whole directly with all the pertinent information, so that we as a board could if needed direct the Superintendent to look into the situation and report back to the board. Our policies that include inclusion and making every student feel safe and welcome need to be enforced and we need to make every effort to ensure that every student is supported.