

Wood Buffalo and District Labour Council

2025 Trustee Candidate Survey

Introduction

The Wood Buffalo and District Labour Council (WBDLC) represents unionized workers across our region. We advocate for strong public services, local job creation, and a more equitable economy. We're asking candidates to respond to the following questions to help workers and their families understand your positions ahead of the 2025 Trustee election.

Section 1: Your Perspective and Priorities

1. Why are you running as a Trustee in 2025, and what motivates you to serve this community?

I am running for Trustee because I am deeply committed to protecting and enhancing the unique faith-based education that Fort McMurray Catholic Schools (FMCS) offers. As a proud graduate of FMCS and a lifelong member of our local Catholic parishes and Wood Buffalo community, my personal journey has been shaped by the values, mentorship, and sense of belonging that our schools provide. I want to ensure that every student and family who chooses FMCS feels that same acceptance, support, and opportunity to grow both academically and spiritually.

My professional experience in human resources, community relations, and education has equipped me with the skills to advocate effectively for students, staff, and families. I am motivated by a passion to foster an inclusive, supportive environment where every learner—especially newcomers, French Immersion families, and multicultural communities—can thrive.

I am also a father of a 10-year-old student currently attending school in our division, and the husband of an educator. Our family is fully invested in the betterment of education in Fort McMurray—not only for the academic potential of every student, but also for the well-being, morale, and sustainability of our education staff. This is not just a professional commitment for me—it's deeply personal.

Serving this community means being a dedicated voice for quality education, faith, inclusion, and lifelong learning—for all families and staff in FMCS.

2. What do you see as the most urgent challenges facing Education today?

The most urgent challenges today include:

- **Managing class sizes and providing individualized supports:** Smaller classes and adequate educational assistant support are essential for inclusive learning. But also essential for the health and wellness of our educators and their ability to feel confident that they can meet the needs of the students in their class(es). Currently class sizes of 35-40 students with special education ratios that have 1 educational assistant assigned to 3 to 5 or more students is not a safe or sustainable practice.
- **Recruitment and retention of educators and support staff:** Ensuring that we attract and keep talented teachers and educational assistants in our northern community is critical for student success. Continued training and professional development ensures our workforce stays skilled and confident for all new demands in education.
- **Equity and inclusion:** Meeting the diverse needs of students that require specialized programs. Also meeting the needs of students that required differentiated approaches to education to meet their individual learning needs. This requires adequate support and training for teachers, administrators, and educational assistants, to ensure they feel confident in their decision making, planning and team approach.
- **Sustaining faith-based programming:** Advocating for faith based education to remain a publicly funded choice for all parents across Alberta.
- **Supporting mental health and well-being:** Fostering a welcoming, inclusive environment where students, teachers, and staff feel represented, celebrated and encouraged.
- **Enhancing community partnerships:** Building authentic learning experiences that connect students to local opportunities, businesses and resources for growth that will carry them beyond their school years.

Addressing these requires collaboration, innovation, and strong advocacy both locally and provincially.

3. What does an inclusive school system look like to you? What is an adequate number of students in a classroom? With an educational assistant?

An inclusive school system welcomes and supports every student regardless of background, ability, or learning style. It provides equitable access to faith-based programming, multicultural support, and specialized resources tailored to individual needs.

Class sizes ideally should be small enough to allow personalized attention—typically around 20-25 students per classroom, with smaller groups for early grades and consideration of class complexities. Specialized programs require smaller class sizes and optimally one to one support for complex student needs whenever possible. For classrooms with educational assistants, ratios should reflect the level of support needed. School teams should feel there is flexibility and opportunity to add one to one support when that is what is needed, safest

and most optimal for programming and learning needs. School teams should have the ability to create small groups of students that will receive support with an educational assistant based on similar needs, learning styles, interventions and programming. Currently students are often clustered out of necessity and not in a way that allows for best practice individualized programming.

Inclusion also means providing culturally sensitive programming, accessible mental health resources, and ensuring all students can fully participate in faith and academic life without barriers.

Section 2: Handling of Education Funding and working with Government

4. Please give your thoughts on public funding of Education in Alberta. What areas will you advocate for and why?

Public funding is the backbone of a strong educational system. I believe it must prioritize:

- **Reducing class sizes and hiring more educational assistants** to improve learning outcomes for all students and ensure sustainable environments for staff.
- **Supporting mental health and well-being programs** for students and staff.
- **Sustaining and expanding faith-based and French Immersion programs**, which provide more opportunities and choices for families in our community.
- **Investing in technology and innovative learning resources** to prepare students for the future. This includes robotics, engineering, skills areas, and trades.
- **Providing adequate funding for continued Truth and Reconciliation education** through employment of liaisons and Indigenous professionals to support this learning and progress authentically.

I will advocate for funding that reflects the unique needs of our diverse community. A lens on efficient use of funds, transparency, and accountability should accompany all funding discussions and planning.

5. Do you, as a potential trustee, plan on standing up to the Minister of Education to advocate for students and staff in this division if need be? Give an example of an issue that you plan to advocate on if elected into this role.

Absolutely. As a trustee, it is my duty to be a strong advocate for our students, teachers, and support staff, even if that means standing up to the Minister of Education. For example, I plan to actively advocate for better recruitment and retention strategies for educators in Fort McMurray, a region facing unique challenges due to its remote location and economic fluctuations.

I will also push for increased funding to reduce class sizes and expand support services, ensuring that students receive the individualized attention they deserve. My background in human resources and community relations has prepared me to engage respectfully and effectively with government officials to bring forward these critical issues.

Additionally, many assessment demands have been placed on students and teachers by the provincial government. This collection of assessment data can serve to benefit instructional decisions but can also take up many instructional hours and also feel developmentally inappropriate at times. Discussions around the value of these assessments and the true data that they provide to teachers versus the instructional time that they take to administer and the lack of support to administer them is a discussion that needs to take place at the ministerial level.

Section 3: Working with Employees of the Division

6. In a Trustee role you will be working with CUPE, ATA, Administration, and Out of Scope employees. How do you plan on addressing the concerns of all these groups? How will you be staying in touch with the employees of the division you are running in?

I believe strong relationships begin with open, respectful, and ongoing dialogue. One of the ways I stay connected with our community is through hosting a local podcast, which regularly features guests from all walks of life in Wood Buffalo—including educators, CUPE and ATA members, educational assistants, school administrators, provincial politicians, and everyday citizens.

Most recently, I worked closely with local union leaders to bring representatives from all interested unions onto the podcast. This created a space where they could speak openly about their priorities, concerns, and goals. It was also an opportunity for me to listen and learn directly from them, while helping to share their stories with a wider audience. These conversations strengthen community understanding and help bridge gaps on issues that are often challenging or complex.

Because of this podcast, I'm frequently invited to participate in local events, which keeps me actively engaged with stakeholders across the entire spectrum—from families and students to union reps, school staff, and business leaders. This ongoing presence helps ensure that I stay in tune with the evolving needs of the school division and the broader community.

As a trustee, I will continue using this platform and these opportunities to build trust, encourage transparency, and keep lines of communication open between the board and the people it serves.

7. How do you feel about being involved in contract negotiations with union leaders? Do you have any experience in union negotiations?

I welcome the opportunity to be involved in contract negotiations. My background in human resources has given me experience working alongside unions and management to facilitate discussions around labour relations, dispute resolution, and policy implementation.

While I have not been a lead negotiator, I have contributed to collective discussions and have a strong understanding of balancing organizational goals with employee rights and needs. I am committed to fair, respectful negotiation processes that prioritize a positive work environment and the well-being of staff.

8. Do you, as a potential trustee, plan on keeping with the current policies to support staff health and safety?

Supporting staff health and safety is not just about maintaining policies—it's about continuously evaluating working conditions through the lens of optimal safety, especially for support staff who often work in dynamic and high-demand environments.

As a trustee, I will advocate for:

- Appropriate, up-to-date training for all staff, particularly as needs evolve in classrooms, with students requiring varying levels of behavioural, physical, and emotional support.
- A proactive approach to identifying and addressing safety concerns in real time—not only physical safety but also mental and emotional well-being.
- Collaboration with union leaders and frontline staff to ensure that health and safety policies reflect the realities of the job, and are not just reactive but preventative.

Everyone working in our schools deserves a safe, supported, and well-prepared environment so they can focus on what matters most—helping students succeed.

9. Some school boards have been changing their structure and contracting out more jobs within the school board. As union leaders we are completely opposed to this change. What will you do to ensure all jobs in the bargaining units are kept and workers keep their positions?

I firmly believe in supporting the stability and dignity of unionized jobs. Contracting out can undermine job security and employee morale, which ultimately affects the quality of education and support services.

I will advocate against contracting out bargaining unit jobs and work collaboratively with union leaders to explore cost-effective solutions that maintain in-house employment. Retaining skilled staff within the division strengthens our schools and fosters a cohesive, motivated team dedicated to student success.

Section 4: Working with Families and the Community

10. In a trustee role there are many stakeholders. Students, families, the community, staff, and administration. We know that here in Fort McMurray we have many different needs and programs. How do you plan on hearing the needs of all stakeholders?

Similarly to how I answered the question in Section 3 I will reshare some of the ways that I stay connected.

I believe strong relationships begin with open, respectful, and ongoing dialogue. One of the ways I stay connected with our community is through hosting a local podcast, which regularly features guests from all walks of life in Wood Buffalo—including educators, CUPE and ATA members, educational assistants, school administrators, provincial politicians, and everyday citizens.

Most recently, I worked closely with local union leaders to bring representatives from all interested unions onto the podcast. This created a space where they could speak openly about their priorities, concerns, and goals. It was also an opportunity for me to listen and learn directly from them, while helping to share their stories with a wider audience. These conversations strengthen community understanding and help bridge gaps on issues that are often challenging or complex.

Because of this podcast, I'm frequently invited to participate in local events, which keeps me actively engaged with stakeholders across the entire spectrum—from families and students to union reps, school staff, and business leaders. This ongoing presence helps ensure that I stay in tune with the evolving needs of the school division and the broader community.

As a trustee, I will continue using this platform and these opportunities to build trust, encourage transparency, and keep lines of communication open between the board and the people it serves.

My current self employment in the community provides me with great flexibility to attend meetings, events, celebrations, and requested conversations. I will be a trustee that is accessible and available to listen and be engaged.