

Trumpeter Local #26 Questions (advance notice ones)

1. Not asked in advance.

2. What are your top priorities for change in our division for next year?

First: Prioritize expertise. We have teachers delivering curriculum outside their training: generalists teaching music, art, French, and specialized content, such as higher-level mathematics and sciences. This increases teacher burnout and decreases student outcomes. We need to staff specialized positions and protect expert teaching. Asking every teacher to teach any subject is a form of deprofessionalization, and it's a symptom of inadequate staffing and funding.

Second: Transparent communication with our community. This isn't just good practice—it's a legal requirement. Section 33 of the Education Act requires boards to be accountable to students, parents, and the community for student achievement. Parents deserve honest data about class sizes, wait times for assessments and supports, and the gap between student needs and available resources. Without transparency about the challenges, we can't build support for solutions. I know there are reports, but they fail to convey the human experience. Averages aren't good governance.

Third: Build community partnerships to support our schools. The province needs to fund education adequately—that's non-negotiable. But while we advocate for that funding, we can mobilize community support. Reading buddies to work with students. Lunchroom volunteers so teachers can actually take a break and eat lunch. This isn't replacing professionals—it's creating capacity so educators can focus on teaching. Grande Prairie has people who want to help. Let's organize that energy.

3. If forced to move money in the budget to an area of greater need, what area(s) would you consider reducing the funding for?

Before we talk about cuts, we need an honest accounting. I'd push for what I'd call a shadow budget—a true cost analysis—that calculates the actual cost of delivering what the Ministerial Order, Education Act, and Programs of Study require.

Start with each school: Teachers determine what they need to deliver the whole curriculum in accordance with the Teaching Quality Standard. Principals determine what they need to support those teachers according to the Leadership Quality Standard, and so forth. Do an actual inventory—needs versus funding.

Then compare that to what the province provides.

I believe that analysis would show we're already below adequate funding—that there's nothing left to cut without abandoning provincial requirements. And that provides us with the evidence base to advocate for real funding, not just managing scarcity.

4 & 5 Not asked in advance.

6. Do you favor the incorporation of private/charter/independent schools within public school authorities? Yes or No.

Yes—if they're receiving public funding. Public money requires public oversight and accountability. Section 33 of the Education Act requires boards to be accountable to the public. If private and charter schools receive public dollars, that same accountability standard should apply.

However, here's the problem with how this is currently unfolding: The Ministerial Order states that it aims to deliver world-class education for every student "while" expanding choice—"while" means simultaneously, not sequentially.

Currently, we're expanding choice and increasing funding to private and charter schools at a faster rate than to public schools, which are chronically underfunded and have teachers ready to strike. That's not "while"—that's "instead of."

If we are supposed to follow the Ministerial Order as written, we need to ensure world-class public education for 95% of students as step one.

7 Not asked in advance.

8. What are your thoughts on one or several of the recent Ministerial Order(s)?

I'm concerned about all three orders because they create exceptions to protections that should apply to all students.

The Education Act already requires welcoming, safe environments. The Human Rights Act protects students from discrimination based on gender identity. Those protections exist for a reason—to prevent bullying and harm.

I value parental involvement. Section 32 of the Education Act designates parents as the primary decision-makers, and I fully support that even beyond the scope of this question.

But legislation can't have asterisks that say 'except you.' These orders put educators in impossible positions—forced to choose between student safety and legal compliance. That's not a choice teachers should have to make.

9. Do schools have adequate facilities? (If not, what improvements need to be made?)

Before I answer, I want to be clear I'm basing this on the province's own standards. I've marked the relevant sections of Ministerial Order. When I say our facilities are inadequate, I'm measuring them against what the government itself requires.

Adequate facilities? No. Not all our schools can deliver the entire curriculum to all students, not to the provincial standards.

Here's why this matters legally: Section 11 of the Education Act requires boards to "provide to each student an education program that will give the student the opportunity to meet the standards of education set by the Minister."

That's mandatory—"shall" means it's a legal requirement.

The Minister set those standards in this Ministerial Order. It requires "a well-rounded education strengthened through the inclusion of art, music, dance, and drama."

So by law, we must deliver programs that meet these standards.

Let me use music as a specific example.

We can't deliver music education without music teachers and music rooms.

Alberta's elementary music curriculum is progressive and sequential. By Grade 1, students should play rhythm and Orff instruments and respond to so-mi-la hand signs.

By Grade 3, they're reading symbols to follow melodies and singing in parts. By Grade 4, they're playing recorders and ukuleles. Grade 6 building chords, performing songs with harmonies - in tune.

You cannot deliver this curriculum without three things: dedicated music spaces, proper instruments, and trained music specialists. Right now, most of our elementary students have access to none of these.

In our district, specialist music instruction only begins at Grade 5, and it is only available at choice schools.

We're down to one elementary music specialist.

Concentrating specialists in select schools means that other schools must deliver this curriculum without the same expertise or facilities. So, whether a child receives a real music education depends on whether their family is aware of school choice and can arrange transportation. That's not equitable access—and it's not legal compliance with Section 11.

The same gaps exist for arts, hands-on science, Phys ed. When we lose specialized spaces and staff, we can't deliver the curriculum the province requires.

Bottom line: Section 11 of the Education Act and Ministerial Order 005/2024 legally require these programs. We need to fund the facilities and staff to actually deliver them—across all schools, not just the lucky ones.

11. Not asked in advance.