

Hello! And Happy New (School) Year!

I hope you have all had an enjoyable summer and for those of you who have children starting school for the very first time today or heading back to school and for those who work in schools, I wish you a great and safe start to the New Year.

Traffic safety continues to be an issue around schools.

What can we do about it? One consideration, I believe, is to ask whether our children need a drive or whether they could walk to school. With obesity on the rise, walking or biking can be a great option. [SHAPE Alberta](#) has some good ideas for schools and parents on how to get kids walking and staying safe at the same time.

Another consideration is to ask if we as drivers are contributing to the problem. For example, do we slow down for school and playground areas? Yesterday I signed up for the new Pace Car program in Riverbend in which I pledged to drive the speed limit and I know that Twin Brooks has had a Pace Car program running for the last year and is a pilot community for a 40 km/h speed limit. Yellowbird, with the support of the City, has also been active in encouraging motorists to slow down as have the Aspen Gardens/Royal Gardens schools and community leagues by developing a community pledge. Any other ideas to share?

School Fees : What do you think?

Thanks to Sandra for her comments and concerns about school fees. She wrote,

“My daughter is starting High School ... this fall. Having no experience with High School, since I was enrolled myself, I was stunned and outraged when I worked out the fees - \$435.00. This **does not** include supplies (including a new net-book (\$350) and new graphing calculator (\$130) or transportation). I don't know how single income families can manage. Of course, I could drop a few items such as year book, student activities, etc. but what kind of experience would I be setting up for my child. Sorry, you can't participate in any clubs or teams, or lunch time activities because your parents wouldn't come up with the fees. Or we could take her out of the music program and save \$180 on instrument rental costs.”

I know many people have concerns about School Fees so just wanted to share what I wrote back to Sandra and to see if you have any ideas about how to manage “the school fee” issue better. I said,

I agree – \$435 a lot of money. And I, too, worry about single income families in this regard. Principals do have the discretion to waive fees on an individual basis with the school budget absorbing those costs, and I believe they do so as need be. The ultimate goal for all of us in the district – staff, parents, trustees –is to see all kids achieving success in their studies, and this discretionary ability allows some flexibility here to even out the playing field. I also think that most, if not all, schools have class sets of graphing calculators/computers available for use by students who don't come with Netbook or graphing calculator in their backpack.

My understanding is that the School Act allows schools to charge fees in the areas of alternative programs, instructional supplies, and materials, and Edmonton Public Schools prohibits schools from charging fees for *instructional materials* (with exception of textbook rental fees and musical instrument rental

fees). Schools may, however, charge for non-instructional materials (field trips, for example) and may also offer to send supplies and materials to students. Under the latter, I believe some councils work to buy school supplies in bulk and make them available to parents.

I guess the ultimate question, which harkens back to the Learning Commission, is what is basic and what is not in terms of education – and how so we fund the basics appropriately. For example, is taking a music/fine arts class a “basic” part of a well-rounded education for all students? If so, given the fact that there is never enough funding to meet all of the great expectations we have for our schools and students – how do we pay for it?

The Future! What is it bringing to us, and are schools ready for it?

Thanks to Trustee Sue Huff for forwarding this link to trustees: [2020 Forecast: Creating the Future of Learning](#) It provides lots of thought provoking material to ponder as the Minister of Education continues with his “transformation of the education system” and also, as we enter an election campaign – a perfect opportunity to collectively dream about what the community wants for public schools.

Here is more food for thought on the future. See the “Sixteen Trends” that are underway and affecting our future, according to author Gary Marx <http://portal.ers.org/content/657/pdf-specwin06a.pdf> (page 3)

And finally, I am pleased to be sharing a hard copy version of [“The E4 Framework – The Essential Elements of Excellent Education for Alberta’s Public Schools”](#) with school councils and community leagues in Ward H this fall. It, too, holds a vision of what we expect 2020 graduates to be like and what we want our communities to be like in the future. It was created with and by communities across Alberta by members of the Public School Boards Association of Alberta, and I contributed the work done in Ward H on this same topic in May 2009 to the E4 Committee. The document creates a good platform for discussing what our local schools need to be offering – check it out, especially the questions on pages 26-29. Good dinner table conversation fodder here!

Speaking of the Future, “Inspiring Action” continues

As mentioned previously, the provincial Inspiring Action transformation guides continue to be posted on the website (see links below), and opportunities to participate in “online facilitated dialogues” are also available. Think about joining into one of these online events over the next couple of months.

I attended one on Parent & Community Engagement in July – it was good. Out of the online dialogues come further ideas on the topic, which are posted and discussed in the [IDEA FORUM](#). Ideas on Governance and Parent/Community Engagement are now posted – check them out and add your two cents or million dollar ideas! The ideas contributed and the results from the transformation guide surveys will be considered in the development of a new Education Act scheduled to come to the Legislative Assembly next winter/spring.

UPCOMING

Saturday, September 11, 8:30 – 10:30 am. Campaign Breakfast!

Come and hear about life as a trustee and my platform for 2010-13. Ask questions, raise issues. Find out about my campaign. Meet my Campaign Manager Pat Sawatzky and Flyer Chair Barbara Jean Lake-Ramnath. If you are interested in attending , please contact pat@catherineripley.ca by Wednesday September 8. Would love to see you!

September 12, 9:30 am to NOON – Trustee Panel Discussion

Former ECSD trustee & current MLA Janice Sarich, St. Albert Protestant Board Chair Morag Pansereau, and EPSB Trustee Sue Huff will provide perspectives on trusteeship in a panel format with time for Q&A. The public is welcome.

Woodcroft Community League Hall, 13915 – 115th Avenue For more information, <http://www.responsivetrustee.com/>

September 14, 6 pm : Public Board Meeting

McCauley Chambers, Centre for Education, One Kingsway. All are welcome. I will forward the agenda at the end of next week.

September 15: Official Opening for Johnny Bright K-9 School in Rutherford

September 16: Official Opening for Esther Starkman K-9 School in Terwillegar

So pleased to welcome these two new schools to Ward H!

By September 24, Nominate a Young Person for a “Stars of Alberta Volunteer Award”

The [Stars of Alberta Volunteer Awards](#) honour extraordinary Albertans whose volunteer achievements have contributed to the well-being of their community and fellow community members. To be presented on or around International Volunteer Day, December 5.

By September 26, Youth invited to apply for the City of Edmonton’s Youth Council

If you know youth who fall into the age range of 13- 23 and who want to make a difference in Edmonton, encourage them to apply to be a General Assembly Delegate for the City of Edmonton Youth Council and help make Edmonton a livable city for all. The deadline for applying to sit on the Council for the 2010/2011 term is September 26, 2010. For the application form and more information, visit <http://ceyc.ca/>

September 29, 7 -9 pm: Ward F Trustee Debate

McKernan Community League, 113

For those on this list who live in the neighbourhoods of Brander Gardens, Brookside, Rhatigan Ridge, Ramsay Heights & Bulyea Heights, you are now attached to Ward F. Current candidates for election include [Michael Janz](#), [Joanna Rozmus](#), and [Bev Sawyer](#). The incumbent Don Fleming is undeclared.

<http://www.responsivetrustee.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/WardF.pdf>

October 4 – 8: International Walk to School Week

For more information, www.shapeab.ca

October 18: Election Day!

If you are not sure where to vote, please visit my website www.catherineripley.ca and look under Election 2010/Where to Vote. Information about special ballots and advance polling is also there.

Until October 30: Inspiring Action

Contribute your views on the following topics and help shape a new Education Act (tentatively due for discussion in the legislature in Winter 2011)

<http://engage.education.alberta.ca/inspiring-action/become-involved>

- [Inspiring Action Overall Survey](#)
- [Parental and Community Engagement](#)
- [Shared Governance, Collaboration, School Boards, and Natural Person Powers](#)
- [Student-Centered Education](#)
- Learning Opportunities (coming this month)
- Teaching our Children (coming this month)
- Envisioning Excellence (coming in October)

Also, I noticed this question in the blog section of the Inspiring Action site. [What stories or “good things” are going on in schools that fill and fulfill our students?](#) If there is something good going on in your local school, you are encouraged to share it. From my trustee travels, I KNOW there are many good things happening....so don't be shy. Alternatively (or additionally), why not share those good things on the Edmonton Public Schools [GO PUBLIC](#) site?

Until next time, as always, I am happy to have your insights and ideas and/or to try and answer your questions. You can connect with me directly by email, through Facebook, and guess what – I have now joined Twitter (@cripleyepsb) . This is a stretch for me, but I think it is another place to talk about the fundamental importance public education and hear what is on the minds of another segment of citizens.

Catherine