

## Voting: A reflection of character

Sending a child off to school is one of the most hopeful—and vulnerable—things a parent will ever do. It's a monumental moment, an enormous display of trust. And that trust is something The Manitoba Teachers' Society and the Manitoba School Boards Association take seriously.

On October 30, 2024, the community of Mountain View School Division will elect four new school trustees. The by-election is an extraordinary opportunity, and rare, given the number of open seats, to shape not only the direction of public education in the division, but the character of the school division itself.

The impact of school trustees is significant, to say the least. Described in The Manitoba School Boards Association document *School Boards and Trusteeship in Manitoba*, "...student achievement is a school board's primary reason for existence. But instead of focusing their attention on what's happening in individual classrooms, effective school boards focus their attention on making sure that learning expectations are high for all students, that the policies and resources to make achieving those expectations possible are in place, and that progress towards meeting student achievement goals is being monitored and reported on a regular basis. Budget allocations, hiring decisions, policies on student assessment and staff professional development—these are just a few of the areas where school board decisions have a profound effect on student learning."

Given the significance of it all, elections for school trustees should be hotly contested with tremendous voter turnout. However, as is increasingly true at all levels of elected democracy, perennially low voter turnout is commonplace in Canada. This reality has fundamental implications, and not for the better.

At the school board level, voter engagement creates the conditions for informed debate on the wellbeing and growth of perceptive, constructively critical, compassionate, collaborative, empathetic, problem-solving students who will one day build the healthy, vibrant communities on which we all depend.

Within the community of Mountain View, citizens are uniquely positioned to stand up for students, to reshape the future for the benefit of all.

Mountain View is at a hopeful crossroads. There is a great need for voters to discuss, debate, and cast their ballots intentionally for the education—and the bright and hopeful future—that all children deserve.

School division budgets are a reflection of character. Their policies are a reflection of character. The acts of running for office and voting for those you wish to see elected, too, are a reflection of character.

We need school trustees who stand for student achievement and the principles of public education for all students in Mountain View. And we need voters to ask questions, to speak out, and to vote. The students of Mountain View need you.

Whether you're on the ballot or placing your mark on one, please actively engage in this by-election, for the sake of public education leadership that values and prioritizes all children, that lifts them up, that gives them the tools with which to build a good life, a productive community, and a better world.

The stakes could not be higher.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Sandy Nemeth'.

President, Manitoba School Boards Association

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Nathan Martindale'.

President, Manitoba Teachers' Society