



December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018

## Memorandum

The following is the review of the *Education Curriculum Town Hall* hosted by Jeremy A. Roberts, MPP on the 19<sup>th</sup> of October, 2018.

**Background:** The Government of Ontario launched its province wide consultations so that parents, students, teachers, and anyone else, had the opportunity to participate in the important discussion to decide the future of Ontario's education curriculum. All opinions are welcomed, no viewpoint is given more preference than any other, and no one is excluded from the process.

The point of this Town Hall was to garner feedback from the community of Ottawa West – Nepean on what they would like to see or not see included in the updated school curriculum.

To accomplish this goal, new technology was used as an experiment for input and information gathering. This technology was an application known as PollEverywhere, which utilized smart phones as tools of communication whereupon a question could be presented and community members would be able to provide feedback anomalously without needing to come to a microphone and ensuring that all voices were heard and not just the loudest ones.

We recognize that the use of this technology provided a very different kind of experience than most are likely used to in a town hall format it is important to note that it enabled us to gather far more information in a far more efficient fashion than a regular town hall format. Where we would have managed to hear from just 45 people about a single issue if each exchange lasted two minutes, we were able to receive 977 total responses to the 15 questions that were posed.

Understanding that there would still be those that wished to exercise their voices in a more traditional manner, 1/3 of the allocated time was used for traditional verbal exchange between the community and the MPP.

**Report Purpose:** The purpose of this report is to condense the results of the Town Hall questions into an easily digestible format. This will enable the Ministry of Education to easily, and accurately review and analyze the results of the Town Hall. This report is to be made public and will, in its entirety, be posted on MPP Roberts' website and social media accounts. This document serves as a summary of opinion and is not to be interpreted as an endorsement of opinion.

**Structure:** The Town Hall was segmented to cover each of the 7 different topics that the Government is reviewing, these sections were further segmented into 15 questions in total where 977 total responses were given.



**1. STEM Studies:**

- a. Q1. If students show an aptitude for STEM skills early on, how important is it to you that the curriculum work to facilitate that?
  - i. Results overwhelmingly supported the statement with 92% finding it either “very” or “somewhat important”.
- b. Q2. What are the major gaps in our STEM fields?
  - i. There were many responses, but the two that really stood out as consensus results, which were “math’ & “girls”. There is a well-known need for change to the way we teach math in our curriculum, as falling performance scores have been the trend for several years now.
  - ii. “Girls” was a very interesting response, it was a clear point that more focus needs to be placed on getting girls into the STEM fields at an early age.

**2. Standardized Testing:**

- a. Q1. What are the shortcomings of Standardized Testing?
  - i. We went into this question, which we understand is leading, with the assumption that there was a general dissatisfaction with EQAO tests.
  - ii. What was found was that 37% of respondents thought “teaching to the test” was an issue, while 22% thought Demographic Disparities were an issue.
  - iii. A further 19% thought there were no issues while another 19% chose “other”
- b. Q2. If we were to reform standardized testing, which subjects do you think we should prioritize?
  - i. By good measure, the most popular response was “none” which we in the context of the question as it was elaborated on by MPP Roberts is interpreted to mean opposition to standardized testing .
  - ii. In a roughly three way tie for second were “math”, “english”, and “civics”.
  - iii. We interpret this do mean there is a general consensus that while standardized testing may not necessarily be the best way of measuring student success, if we were to keep it we need the new curriculum to reinforce on core subjects.

**3. Life Skills:**

- a. Q1. Do you believe good habits that are formed or encouraged in school carry into adult life?
  - i. In response to this question 73% of those attending agreed with the statement while 10% opposed and 17% were unsure.
- b. Q2. What life skills do you think our students are lacking that are preventing them from succeeding in the future?
  - i. In response to this question the overwhelming consensus was “critical thinking” generally something we think of as being more of a focus in post-secondary education.
  - ii. Also performing well by consensus was “media literacy”, “financial literacy”, and “taxes.”
  - iii. We believe these results to demonstrate that our town hall group felt that students are not getting the skills necessary to challenge opinions, or evaluate media effectively in the modern world.

4. Cell Phone Use:
  - a. Q1. How do you think cell phone use is impacting learning in our classrooms?
    - i. In response to this open ended question the most popular response was “distracting” however the second most popular answer was “useful.”
    - ii. On this issue there is clearly no major consensus that exists.
  - b. Q2. Should phones be available to students during class time?
    - i. The divide seen in Q1 was continued in similar terms here with 50% saying “Yes” and 40% saying “no”.
5. Health and Sexual Education Curriculum:
  - a. Q1. What principles should underline our health and sexual education curriculum?
    - i. On this issue the major points of consensus emerged around issues of “consent”, “lgbtq”, “diversity”, “equity”, and “inclusion”.
    - ii. While all of these issues are currently in the high school curriculum we believe it was the desire of those in attendance that these values reflected in the curriculum for all students.
  - b. Q2. What topics do you feel are essential in the age-appropriate manner in a health and sexual education curriculum?
    - i. The top responses of consensus to this question were overwhelmingly “body” “consent”, “mental health”, “gender”, & “suicide”.
    - ii. While interpreting “body” to mean body awareness it is clear that the issue of consent was a very important one to be included in one shape or another in all levels of the our health and sexual education curriculum.
    - iii. There was also a very clear expressed desire for a better all-around mental health education in the updated curriculum.
6. Skilled Trades:
  - a. Q1. Do you think there is a stigma around the Skilled Trades career path?
    - i. The response to this prompt was an overwhelming one, with 85% of respondents saying “yes” there is a stigma.
  - b. Q2. Who do you think should take the lead in ending this stigma?
    - i. Response to this question produced an interesting result with the largest consensus building behind the idea that it is the job of “parents” to do better at ending the stigma that many believe exists in what is often a more profitable career path than one from a University education.
    - ii. The second most submitted response was “teachers”.
    - iii. We are interpreting these results as an awareness that something needs to be done, but that it does not fall on one group to do it alone and will require work by parents and educators to make a difference in ending this stigma.
  - c. What Skilled Trades would you like to see (re)introduced into the curriculum?
    - i. A consensus built around a number of what may be considered traditional trades seen in secondary schools. The most common responses were “Electrical”, “carpentry”, “cooking”, & “shop”. These are all classes that have seen cutbacks in recent years in post-

secondary schools, but it is clear that there was a strong desire from our group to see them brought back

- ii. A surprise top performer was “coding” which has been gradually introduced in recent years, but there appears to be a demand to expand access to this skill.

7. Parents Bill of Rights:

a. What values should underpin a potential Parents Bill of Rights?

- i. In response to this question the consensus of the room built solidly behind the word “none”. We are interpreting this to mean that the mood of the room was that there not be a Parents Bill of Rights introduced.
- ii. Other higher performing results included “diversity”, and “family values”. We are interpreting this to mean that if a Parents Bill of Rights were to be created these are the top two consensus points that should be considered when crafting such a document.

8. Other:

a. Are there any other topics we’ve missed that you would like to see considered in our curriculum review?

- i. Here there were three top performing topics of consensus “indigenous”, “civics”, & “history”.