

HILTON O'BRIEN: Take back school boards? You bet!

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According to the radical left-wing blog *Rabble*, “social conservatives” are gearing up for a “[stealth takeover](#)” of Alberta school boards in coming elections.

A hit piece, which was reprinted in other radical organs such as the *Tyee*, attacked Parents for Choice in Education (along with the unrelated political group Take Back Alberta) for talking about school board elections.

If ever there was a case of projection, this is it. You see, that’s [exactly what the unions have been doing](#) across Canada.

Alberta is a poster child for union [big-money interventions](#). In 2021, the Alberta Teachers’ Association (ATA) spent a whopping \$1.1 million dollars as a third-party advertiser to attack the UCP government on the curriculum, right through the campaign period.

At the same time, a cabal of public sector unions in Calgary spent \$1.7 million dollars on a Political Action Committee to control the Calgary elections, including the public school board. They elected every candidate they endorsed. We knew none of this until it was reported after the fact. What the unions did really WAS a ‘stealth steal.’

That being said, [Parents for Choice in Education](#) (PCE) is starting to train people to participate in school board races.

There are three good reasons for doing so:

Participation in school board elections is very low, often 30% or less. Many school board seats are elected by acclamation. This is not healthy for a democracy. This may have more to do with the quality of the campaigns than

any supposed voter apathy: if campaigns can enunciate the issues and communicate more clearly, people are more likely to vote.

It has become clear that ‘progressive’ activists have been spending millions of dollars during school board elections. Activists in public sector unions across the country have been endorsing candidates and getting them elected.

This has allowed them control over large parts of Alberta’s \$9.4 billion dollar education budget, a substantial motivation. This budget works out to roughly \$320,000 per classroom, with an average teacher salary accounting for only \$80,000 of that amount. It appears a large part of the education budget has been diverted, sometimes at the level of the local authority, into advocacy and popular causes which may not contribute to the academic success of students.

Finally, there appears to be a problem in Alberta’s political culture.

It is best exemplified by Danielle Smith’s hiring a consultant from Ontario to run the UCP campaign. Simply put, campaign staff from Alberta are more likely to ensure that campaigns focus on issues of interest to Albertans.

School board elections form a basic and essential ‘on-ramp’ for people to learn about practical local politics, which will also prepare them for the provincial and federal levels.

There’s no secrecy here and no hidden agenda: it’s been openly communicated, which is how *Rabble* was able to link to it. We plan to train not just candidates, but volunteer campaign-runners.

In doing so, we hope to improve public participation in school boards, increase accountability for education funds and make the political system as a whole more accessible to Albertans.

What is most interesting about the *Rabble* piece is its profound sense of entitlement.

It seems to presume school boards should be in the hands of woke activists, backed up by big union money. It takes radical left-wing indoctrination and secrecy policies for granted, [against the wishes of almost all Canadians](#).

It seems scandalous to them that ‘social conservative’ parents and their children should choose to be involved in school board races, an area they clearly feel entitled to as their private domain.

In that context, PCE can be justifiably proud to be the recipient of *Rabble*’s attack. It seems clear to us that *Rabble*’s opinion is a splendid example of why our schools are in trouble. Our schools and school boards are currently in the grip of a ‘progressive’ elite, who feel they have an almost divine right to rule as they see fit.

It’s time that democracy reined in the abuses of the radical leftist activists and big money unions who currently control boards.

It is no secret Albertans, concerned with the current trajectory of our education system, aim to fulfill *Rabble*’s prophecy.

It’s time for common-sense to prevail: strong school boards supporting excellence through maximum parental choice.

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