

New Democratic Party Response – April 26, 2018

What distinguishes your party's education platform from those of the other parties?

The NDP platform offers the change that over 80% of Ontarians are seeking this election. We are offering positive, progressive change that will lift Ontarians up - this is change for the better.

Frankly, the last Liberal budget was a disappointment. The Liberals have had 15 years to get good things done for the people of Ontario, but things have only gotten harder. This last-ditch pitch for votes will not make up for years of mismanagement and neglect.

Doug Ford and the Conservatives don't have a platform. They have made no commitments or revealed any plans for incredibly important issues like fixing the funding formula, tackling the maintenance and repair backlog, or hiring more teachers and educational assistants. What we do know is that the first version of the Conservative platform promised \$6.1 billion in cuts, and as the province's second largest budget item, education is a very easy target.

Andrea Horwath has a plan to fix Mike Harris' broken funding formula, and invest \$16 billion in school maintenance and repairs – something neither of the other parties will do. We will end EQAO testing, invest in mental health supports in schools, cap kindergarten classes and continue the long-overdue curriculum update. Only Andrea Horwath and the Ontario NDP will deliver these commitments to change Ontario's education system for the better.

What is your party's plan to support youth and their families who require timely access to community based services for issues related to mental health?

When the NDP forms government, we will make the investments needed to ensure that any young person in crisis can get the care they need. A major part of this will be fixing the funding formula, to ensure that our boards, education workers, teachers and students have the mental health support that they need.

We will hire 2,200 new mental health care workers (including counsellors, social workers, case managers, system navigators and assertive community treatment staff), allowing 28,000 more Ontarians to access the services they need every year, and create a dedicated Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions.

To assist children and youth in particular, we will invest \$590 million over five years to expand services and increase staff. Based on recommendations by Children's Mental Health Ontario, we believe this will ensure every child gets care within 30 days.

Andrea Horwath has also committed to ending EQAO testing, which has been a major source of stress for students, teachers, and families alike. Using the funds saved by eliminating EQAO, we will hire 400 new mental health care workers, in order to provide mental health supports in every high school.

How would your party modify educational programs and instructional practices to ensure students have the skills, attitudes, values and knowledge to success in today's complex global context?

The Ontario NDP will continue the long-overdue curriculum update that is currently underway, and pay particular attention to career counselling for a changing workplace, as well as financial literacy and mathematics.

We will ensure schools teach inclusive history, including Indigenous history and the legacy of colonialism, the history of Black Ontarians, our province's history with the Underground Railroad, and Caribbean and African experiences.

We believe that schools are at the heart of every community, and we want to ensure school boards have the resources necessary to continue to make that a reality. We will work with local boards to continue to develop schools as community hubs, ensuring there is sufficient support and funding so that everyone can access great public programming and use these facilities.

How will your party review the education funding formula to ensure that school boards receive full and adequate funding?

Andrea Horwath and the NDP are committed to funding schools properly.

We will work with parents, front-line educators, students, and educational experts to overhaul the education funding formula starting with a comprehensive public review based on two key principles: equity and quality.

A new funding formula will allow us to curb class sizes and support our most vulnerable students and their teachers, an important step in making classroom environments safer and more conducive to learning.

The new model will take into account factors that affect rural and remote schools, such as school transportation. We will put a moratorium on school closures until the provincial funding formula is fixed.

How would your party increase student achievement and improve the learning environment for Indigenous students?

The NDP is committed to fostering student growth and achievement in our education system. We are committed to ending EQAO testing, which has been a huge source of stress and worry for students, parents and teachers alike. With the funds saved from ending EQAO, we hire 400 new mental health workers in Ontario high schools. We also know that through our \$16 billion commitment to tackle the repair backlog, and our commitment to fixing the funding formula, classroom environments will become safer and more conducive to learning.

The NDP is also committed to working with First Nations and cultural community leaders, experts and advocates to identify the supports racialized and Indigenous children need to succeed and thrive. Part of our \$209 million investment in the First Nations Health Action Plan includes expanded youth programs, crisis support, trauma response teams, and suicide-prevention training. And we will ensure

that history education includes the full, rich story of Indigenous peoples, the lasting impacts of colonialism and residential schools, and the need for reconciliation.

How would your party maintain labour peace in our school system?

Andrea Horwath and the NDP have a strong record of standing up for the rights of workers. We fully support teachers' and education workers' right to strike. We also understand that lengthy strikes are not beneficial or desired by students, parents, boards, teachers or education workers.

Time and again, Liberal and Conservative governments have shown themselves to be heavy-handed and unwilling to negotiate when teachers and education workers exercise their right to strike. The NDP was the only party that voted against Bill 115, which was found to violate the Charter of Rights and Freedoms by stripping Ontario education workers of their right to bargain collectively.

In the event of a labour dispute, an NDP government will ensure that all parties are participating fully at the table and bargaining in good faith, to ensure labour peace is achieved in a timely manner.

How would your party support the important role of school boards and the democratically elected school board trustee?

We recognize the importance of democratically-elected school trustees, who are close to their communities.

Years of cuts and freezes by consecutive Liberal and Conservative governments have forced school boards and trustees to make incredibly difficult decisions. Boards have had to choose between necessary school repairs and hiring more education assistants or funding special education programs.

We don't think that school boards should ever be put in these positions. The NDP will support school boards by first and foremost funding schools properly. This will alleviate pressure on boards, education workers and students, and provide the resources necessary to curb class sizes, address issues of violence in classrooms, and ensure overall better wellness and learning environments.

The development of a new funding formula will involve consultation with boards, as well as parents, teachers and education workers. Boards will be receiving funding under the fully-implemented new formula within in our first term.