

Jennifer McIntyre
Director of Policy
Ontario Public School Boards' Association
439 University Avenue, 18th Floor
Toronto, Ontario

Dear Jennifer:

Thank you for giving the Green Party of Ontario an opportunity to speak to the issues that matter to teachers in Ontario. I am happy to respond on behalf of the GPO.

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

The GPO recognizes that education is more than classrooms and report cards. Our education system can realize potential, promote equity, and create opportunities for students.

We are committed to putting the needs of our students first while being honest and transparent about how we will pay for necessary staff and resource increases.

The Green Party would unify our publicly funded schools into a single school system with both English and French schools. We are the only party championing this sensible measure that promotes fairness and responsible spending.

Over the past decade, we have been the only party to annually call for the end of EQAO in favour of utilizing its \$30 million annual budget to hire over 1000 Educational Assistants.

The Green Party of Ontario is proud to lead a new way of doing politics that focuses on good public policy over partisan politics, which means we acknowledge and support important policies already put in place by other parties. For example, we are very supportive of the Indigenous Education Strategy, which provides \$66 million each year to help school boards support Indigenous students and requires every school board to have an Indigenous Education Lead.

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?

The Green Party would provide greater access to mental health services for students within the education system by increasing the availability of school counselors, psychologists, behavioral scientists, and social workers.

We would deliver front-line children's services by increasing funding for school counsellors, specialist teachers, psychologists, behavioural counsellors, social workers, librarians, speech language pathologists, and educational assistants so that students have greater access to services and shorter wait times.

Additionally, we would prioritize the increased integration of social services within education, including embedding mental health services into education and greater collaboration across ministries.

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

As a necessary first step to student success in the 21st century, the Green Party would address the current \$612 per pupil funding gap between elementary and secondary students to appropriately fund our educational system.

We would also ensure that the average class size for grades 4 to 8 does not exceed 22 students in order to provide a greater opportunity for students to achieve their learning potential.

In terms of educational programs and instructional practices, the Green Party would build upon current programming and instructional expertise in relation to the findings of the Transformation Steering Committee (established by the Liberal government in 2017). This committee, consisting of students, parents, educators, school and system leaders, Indigenous partners, and businesses, exists to gather input and advice for the implementation of educational changes in the future.

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

The Green Party of Ontario recognizes that the PC Harris-era funding formula, a one-size-fits-all approach whereby the Ontario government centralized tax dollars, has not met the needs of our schools.

Over the past 15 years, the three status quo parties in Queen's Park failed to seize the opportunity to collaborate and achieve a sensible funding formula.

The Green Party would introduce legislation for a comprehensive, evidence-based review of the funding and performance of Ontario's elementary and secondary education system every five years, beginning immediately.

We would also commit to a 10-year investment to eliminate the \$15 billion deferred maintenance backlog in our schools.

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

The Green Party of Ontario is committed to improving the achievement and learning environment for Indigenous students.

We will continue to provide professional learning for our educators based on the recently released *Strengthening Our Learning Journey* report, which is the third progress report on the implementation of the Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework (2007).

This framework aims to support the well-being and achievement of Indigenous learners while increasing all students' knowledge and understanding of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit histories, cultures, contributions, and perspectives.

The report highlights recent achievements and describes the next steps to refresh Ontario's Indigenous Education Strategy, which the Green Party is committed to implementing.

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

We support a collective bargaining process that gives teachers the right to free and fair bargaining.

The Green Party of Ontario was completely opposed to Bill 115, which was found to violate the Charter of Rights and Freedoms by stripping Ontario education workers of their right to bargain collectively.

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

The Green Party of Ontario would ensure that the funding matches the needs and expectations of the school boards and school board trustees.

Please read the rest of our Education vision for Ontario at www.gpo.ca/vision/people.

Thank you,

Matt Richter

GPO Education Critic and Candidate for Parry Sound--Muskoka