



2025 Provincial Election – OPSBA Questions to the Minister of Education and Opposition Party Critics

As a non-partisan association, OPSBA advocates for and represents the voice of our public school boards on the diverse range of issues that affect students and communities, regardless of which political party forms government. Our Association and its members are dedicated to promoting a high-quality system, focused on improving every student's success and well-being.

During provincial elections, OPSBA participates in non-partisan advocacy efforts to ensure education remains top of mind among the provincial parties and the electorate. The Association encourages parents, students, seniors, and other members of the public to learn the issues impacting Ontario's public schools before voting day on February 27, 2025.

Similar to previous election years, OPSBA is seeking your party's answers to these education related questions that support our multi-year priorities and following past practice, the answers will be shared with our membership and posted on our [provincial election webpage](#).

Thank you for your participation.

Questions:

- ***School boards need adequate funding to support the many programs and services needed by Ontario students. In particular, special education continues to be an area that is underfunded. What supports would your party provide for special education?***

For too long, our government, under the leadership of Doug Ford, has neglected and defunded critical education resources. I believe that investing in our students, schools, teachers, and education workers is the number one way to invest in our children's future. I plan to restore per-student funding by \$1500 to make up for the \$3.1 billion cuts made by the Ford Government since 2018. To ensure adequate funding that meets students needs, I will establish an independent review of Ontario's education funding formula and review the formula every five years. I will specifically ensure adequate funding for special education assistants, counsellors, social workers, as well as ESL teachers and other supports to provide equitable access to learning and school activities for all students.

I also plan to provide enhanced funding for de-streaming, including reduced class sizes, dedicated education workers, training, planning time, and resources to further increase equitable education for all, and further mitigate systemic discrimination. Further, I plan to establish an Education Task Force that includes both education workers and students with the aim of providing input on education and funding models to address critical issues such as the design of special education supports and programs.

I plan to work with the Minister of Education and join with Teacher and Education Worker unions to ensure adequate funding and resourcing to increase accessibility and support optimal learning outcomes and social development.

Currently, Ontario is facing the lowest per-student funding in over ten years as a result of the Ford Government's extensive cuts to education. I plan to work with those most impacted to invest in our children's future by creating healthy, equitable and adequately funded learning environments.

•Will your party work together with public school boards and support the role of democratically elected and appointed public school board trustees?

Yes, I trust in elections and believe a fair, democratic process is essential to the survival of school boards. I will work with school boards and trustees to champion equitable, fair and healthy environments for all students and educational staff. It is a priority to work collaboratively to ensure adequate funding and provision of support for students, teachers and the education system. This is essential in creating a better Ontario together.

•What will your party do to prioritize the revitalization of Indigenous languages? Which of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action does your party plan to focus on?

I am committed to working with Indigenous communities with full participation, partnership and respect. Reconciliation is essential, and as a party, we will work towards this by accepting the Truth of genocide and of the legacy continuing to impact Indigenous people today.

To prioritize the revitalization of Indigenous languages, I am committed to working with Indigenous educators and community leaders to develop more curriculum offerings in Indigenous studies, including languages.

I will fully invest in all Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, starting with the adoption and implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), in partnership with Indigenous leadership and communities. I will fast track the implementation of all the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation, with a focus on recognizing Indigenous communities right to self determination, and supporting Indigenous leadership in child welfare, environmental stewardship, health care and housing. Additionally, I will work with Indigenous educators and community leaders to implement increased educational offerings about the horrific legacy of colonialism, residential schools and environmental racism.

•Will your party commit to engaging in a collaborative discussion with school boards with the goal of establishing updated guidelines for pupil accommodation reviews?

As a former school social worker, I have extensive knowledge and experience in working with school boards. As a result, I am committed to ensuring consistency and transparency in developing updated guidelines for pupil accommodation reviews and to putting forth the effort to match staffing to meet accommodations. I will ensure that in these plans, that we are capping grades 4-8 class sizes to at most 24 students and kindergarten to grade 3 to at most 26 students, ensuring adequate staffing with a full time teacher and designated early childhood educator. Sustainable, accessible school planning is essential to reducing barriers and building a fairer Ontario for all.

- ***How will you ensure that human rights education, including anti-racism, equity and anti oppressive perspectives, is meaningfully integrated into the K-12 curriculum, and what concrete actions will your party take to support school boards in this work?***

Above all, I believe in creating a more fair and equitable Ontario for everyone. To start, increased funding will allow for more staff, programs and curriculum development focussed on anti-racism, equity and anti-oppressive perspectives. I will specifically invest in quality professional development opportunities for educators. This will include requiring ongoing educational training about 2SLGBTQIA+ identities, gender and sexuality, and examining prejudice, assumptions, and privilege that builds awareness of homo/bi/transphobia and racism for those providing publicly funded services. I will also work with Indigenous communities and leaders to develop curriculum focussed on education about colonialism and Indigenous Studies. Additionally, I will strengthen the Anti-Racism Directorate to more ambitiously address systemic racism in education, and other sectors through increased funding, more objective goals, and improved reporting on data outcomes

- ***What specific policies, resources, and funding will your party implement to help school boards establish and sustain roles and research dedicated to upholding human rights, particularly addressing anti-Black racism, accessibility and poverty in education?***

In our dedication to building a more equitable Ontario where no one is left behind, I am fighting to eradicate racism, ableism and poverty within and outside our education system. To do this, I will increase overall funding in education to support adequate staffing, resources and reduced classroom sizes. This includes funding for ESL teachers, social workers, educational assistants and other supports to provide equitable access to learning and school activities for all students. I will provide enhanced funding in support of de-streaming and the elimination of EQAO standardized testing to create equitable educational opportunities for students who are most impacted by systemic discrimination, including Black, Indigenous and Racialized students, students with disabilities, and students living in poverty.

I will ensure funding takes into account the unique needs of rural resources. I will also establish an independent review of Ontario's education funding formula to ensure this funding is sustained, to be reviewed every five years.

On a broad scale, I am committed to doubling Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program, get rid of unfair clawbacks, and ensure shelter allowances that

reflect where people live, to reduce poverty and homelessness and increase wellbeing for individuals and families in Ontario. I will continue to push for our government to fulfill AODA recommendations to reduce barriers and increase accessibility.

Further, I commit to the elimination of racism and discrimination within the Ontario Public Service ensuring this includes conducting random external audits, data collection and reporting, and establishing a safe harassment and discrimination reporting system for staff.

A government focussed on equitable systems is a government that is invested in the wellbeing of all people. I am focussed on developing equitable, healthy systems and policy that benefit all Ontarians, not just those at the top.

- ***Will your party consider supporting Student Nutrition Programs by providing funding for adequate space and infrastructure (including equipment) for food storage, preparation, and adequate spaces for student to receive food, sit and eat? Student Nutrition Programs cannot and should not rely on volunteers. Will your party consider providing funding to hire certified food program staff?***

Yes, Student Nutrition Programs are essential to supporting the health and wellbeing of our youth. I have been and will continue to fight for Student Nutrition Programs in Ontario schools, and have already supported agreements between the Ontario and Federal government that result in \$108.5 Million for our School Nutrition Programs in Ontario. I will immediately double the number of students that can access the Student Nutrition Programs and expand this to be province-wide by 2030. I will increase funding for staffing for Student Nutrition Programs, ensure new schools have the equipment and space necessary to support Nutrition Programs, and support the integration of nutrition programs in elementary and secondary schools.

- ***Mental Health supports continue to be a big need for Ontario students and their families. How will you demonstrate a commitment to ensuring the well-being of our students and their parents/caregivers?***

As a former school social worker, I know first hand how students and their families are impacted by mental health challenges, exacerbated by economic disparity, housing gaps, climate anxiety and lack of funding in schools. As many as 1 in 5 children and youth in Ontario will experience some form of mental health struggle, with most not receiving the support needed due to significant systemic gaps. Within schools, I will ensure adequate funding for special education assistants, counsellors and social workers, while reducing class sizes and providing necessary student supports. I will provide funding to school boards to ensure students and educators have access to mental health support, when and where they need it.

I am committed to tackling the mental health crisis that has been chronically underfunded by including mental health and addiction care coverage under OHIP. Mental health is health, and it is not only necessary but vital to care for the mental health of all in our communities. In this effort, I will also increase base

funding for community mental health services and expand family health teams to integrate mental health and addictions services. I will immediately make investments in frontline mental health to reduce wait times to 30 days or less for children and youth, while working alongside municipalities and non-profits to make this happen. I will also increase investment in Youth Wellness Hubs province wide to increase access to comprehensive youth services. Additional investments in parent support programming will also be a priority.

By increasing access and reducing barriers to mental health care for students, caregivers and staff alike, I am working towards a healthier, more equitable Ontario for all.

•Are there any other specific education-related platform pieces you would like to highlight?

The safety and wellbeing of our students and education system is a top priority.

I plan to work with educational systems and communities to address risks of harm to youth resulting from increased access to online platforms, including risks of trafficking, exposure to adult content, gambling and burgeoning technology addiction.

I further believe in promoting a code of conduct for trustees, to ensure the wellbeing of staff, students and school board members, and in keeping with our priorities of a healthier Ontario.

I plan to work with unions, school boards, and the Ministry of Education to improve human resources strategies to support adequate staffing levels for both Educational Assistants and teachers, where temporary and long term absences are filled with OT and LTO staff.

Finally, I plan to further work for the wellbeing of Ontarians by investing in climate protections in education. Where new schools are built, I will ensure buildings are planned using sustainable materials and using sustainable energy sources. I will also implement climate education at all levels of our education system, from trustees, administration, staff and students.

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