

Ontario Public School Board Association Survey

February 16, 2025

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?

The Ford government's chronic underfunding has created significant deficits in special education funding across the province. Many school boards have reported that the funding they receive for transportation and special education is insufficient to cover the actual costs.

An Ontario NDP government would take decisive action to address these challenges. We are committed to properly funding special education based on the unique needs of each student. We will reverse Ford's \$1500 per student funding cut and implement a needs-based funding model that ensures every learner receives the support they deserve. Our public education system must be a place where all students, regardless of ability, can thrive and succeed.

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

Absolutely. School Boards are elected by their communities, and do important work. We have raised concerns about the governments approach to school boards, frequently imposing new policies on extremely tight timelines, without providing necessary funding support needed to impose new requirements. We are committed to being a partner with school boards, and to work together to ensure student success across this province.

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?

Marit Stiles and an NDP government will work to fulfill Ontario's obligations to the outstanding Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations, and we will make Truth and Reconciliation Day a statutory provincial holiday.

We will support First Nations knowledge keepers, Indigenous language programs and land-based educational initiatives to thrive. An NDP government will also ensure equitable

funding for Indigenous education, and we will make Indigenous and Treaty history mandatory curriculum in Ontario classrooms. We will also double the budget of the First Nations School Nutrition program.

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

We are committed to engaging in discussions with school boards on any matters of concern. We remain committed to keeping schools open and ensure that rural and northern schools in particular have appropriate funding that considers their unique needs.

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?

We will increase access to education programs that are created by experts from marginalized communities, including Indigenous-led education programs about First Nations history, culture, and language. We will ensure that education decisions, particularly changes in curriculum, are made in consultation with educators, school boards and parents to ensure that those who know best can help us strengthen our publicly funded education system.

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?

We will initiate an equity audit that takes incidents of racism seriously at all Ontario schools and dedicate a specific budget line for combating racism in the province

We'll continue the long overdue work of ending streaming in Ontario so that no student is put at a disadvantage due to systemic racism, and every student can succeed. De-streaming is a process that requires consultations and collaboration between parents, educators, school boards, unions and student voices to ensure the process is fair, funded, evidence-based and equitable. We would ensure that teachers and education workers are provided with appropriate training and access to additional resources as de-streaming is implemented.

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?

Kids can't learn on an empty stomach. Families are facing record high grocery bills, and inflation from tariffs could drive up costs even further. School nutrition programs in Ontario are grappling with a nearly "limitless need", and provincial funds cannot meet the rising demand and increasing cost of food. We are committed to increasing Ontario's investment in school food programs, and creating a truly universal student nutrition program. Ontario already feeds some kids in school; we'll expand it for all and use fresh food prepared and grown right here in Ontario to do it.

We're committed to working with school boards and organizations to determine what resources are required to make this program successful.

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?

Our kids and the caring adults who support them deserve a safe environment that promotes learning. We are committed to properly funding education, in order to get to smaller class sizes, more staff, more dedicated teachers, ECEs, custodial and trade workers – to ensure that students get the one-on-one attention they need and maintaining a nurturing learning environment. Having more caring adults in schools makes them safer for everyone. In addition, we are committed to ensuring that at least one mental health professional will be in every school.

We recognize there is a challenge with worker recruitment and retention. We will work with the College to reimplement one-year teachers college, to get more teachers trained. We would work with the sector on retention challenges, to ensure that the workers we get in the system want to stay in the system.

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

We would will address classroom violence by implementing an Emergency Safe Schools Plan, which includes:

- Funding to hire additional qualified staff, including mental health professionals, education assistants, child and youth workers, and other education workers to support learning and extra-curriculars.
- A single, province-wide online reporting system for violent incidents and data collection to understand the full scope of the problem
- Funding for comprehensive training for all workers and supervisors

We recognize that the current funding for student transportation is inadequate. We would work with boards to ensure equitable funding for school transportation to ensure that families can count on a school bus.

We are committed to investing an additional \$830 million a year, on top of existing capital commitments, to fund school repairs and keep up with school maintenance needs.