



Ted Darby

Your Candidate in Hastings—Lennox and Addington

The following pages detail Ted Darby's responses to a questionnaire sent from OSSTF District 29's Political Action Committee. These questions were drafted by the District 29 Political Action Committee, and Mr. Darby's responses are highlighted in yellow. His victory in Hastings-Lennox and Addington in the upcoming June 2nd provincial election would help support public education in Ontario. For more information, or options to volunteer or support, <https://teddarby.ontarioliberal.ca/>

1. How has (or how will) your political party strengthen the publicly funded education system in Ontario?

My priorities are: 1) Protect rural schools, 2) Support innovative solutions developed in collaboration with local teachers and parents, 2) invest in facilities, 3) Stop EQAO testing. 4) Supporting local Boards and a more decentralized approach to decision making that engages education workers.

Fully funded public education is the lynchpin of a just society. Ontario families deserve a plan for this moment that will invest in smaller class sizes with hard caps of 20, in-person learning, 1,000 additional mental health professionals, 5,000 additional special education staff and programs to catch up for lost learning time.

2. Would you commit to not allowing public funding of private and charter schools?.

I am firmly committed to not using public money (funding) to support private schools. We need to support and strengthen our public school system

3. With declining enrolment, school boards have been faced with tough decisions on school closures and the programs that can be offered. What steps would your party take to address declining enrolment and potentially reduced programming opportunities for students?

Declining enrollment is part of our demographic reality in many Ontario communities. We need to continue to work on innovative solutions such as JK to Grade 12 in one facility. We also need to explore collaborative arrangements with School Boards i.e., shared bus service. We'll encourage schools and community hubs to share buildings to bring together different services so students and their families can easily access other programs, especially in rural and Northern Ontario. We'll restore the funding Ford's government cut to support after-school community programs. We're also committed to ensuring small town and rural communities have equitable access to schools in their communities, including through smaller class sizes and additional programming and operating funding.

4. Do you believe more work needs to be done on violence prevention in schools? What has your political party committed to doing in the future?

Any violence in our schools is unacceptable. Our schools must be safe and inclusive places — not only for students and their families, but for staff. The Liberal Party is committed to hiring 5,000 additional special education and student success workers — more than one for every school — to reduce wait times for services and provide additional support for high-needs students. We'll also strengthen training and enforcement to ensure occupational health and safety requirements and reporting of violent incidents are being met.

5. What is your party's view on destreaming? What type of funding model will your party advocate for to provide sustainable academic supports (smaller class sizes, hiring education workers, etc)

We'll end academic streaming in Grades 9 and 10 which often permanently and prematurely limits a student's future learning and job potential. We'll do this with appropriate support, including smaller class sizes, teacher training and additional help for students experiencing learning gaps.

6. How will your party revise the education funding formula to ensure that school boards receive full and adequate funding to meet student needs?

We know we need to review the education funding formula from top to bottom to ensure it meets the needs of our schools, students, parents, and educators

7. What will your party do to restore full funding to adult education programs?

Yes, we are committed to properly funding adult education. Learners of all ages need support to learn and prepare for their next step.

8. What will happen to full day kindergarten if your party forms the next government?

Ontario Liberals are the party that implemented full-day kindergarten and it will be protected and strengthened by our government.

9. What steps will your party take to ensure post secondary education opportunities are available and accessible to all qualified students, including those from lower- and middle-income families, as well as those living in rural, northern, and remote communities?

The Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) helps students pay for college and university, but Ford cut the program's funds by more than half – forcing thousands of students to take on more debt or leave school. We'll reverse these damaging cuts, giving more grants that students never have to pay back. And as part of our ambitious plans, we'll fully cover tuition for all early childhood education and personal support worker programs at Ontario colleges.

Training for a good career shouldn't necessitate a move to a large city. We'll invest in improving online options for higher education and training for rural and remote students and ensure the viability of our Northern post-secondary institutions.

10. Outline your party's plan for addressing the healthy and safety issues that have intensified in schools since the onset of the COVID crisis, specifically within Black, Indigenous and racialized communities.

Schools should have been the last to close and the first to open. Instead, Doug Ford's Conservatives prioritized big business and shortchanged our kids at every turn. We will add the COVID-19 vaccine to the list of nine other universal vaccines to attend school under the *Immunization of Schools Pupil Act* and commit to an aggressive outreach campaign to combat vaccine misinformation and reach more people with vaccines and boosters. As part of our school repair plan, we'll fix ventilation standards in all schools.

We'll also secure a robust provincial stockpile of free in-home rapid tests and high-quality masks and provide 10 paid sick days to all workers.

We also know we have to tackle the social determinants of health, including expanding access to nutrition programs, mental health and newcomer settlement programs.

11. Does your party see an opportunity to capitalize on greater utilization of public school facilities within communities (for example, the Community Hub model)

We'll encourage schools and community hubs to share buildings to bring together different services so students and their families can easily access other programs, especially in rural and Northern Ontario. We'll restore the funding Ford's government cut to support after-school community programs. We're also committed to ensuring small town and rural communities have equitable access to schools in their communities, including through smaller class sizes and additional programming and operating funding.

12. Standardized testing is a large expense to taxpayers in Ontario while delivering negligible value. Are there any changes to the current system that your party would advocate for and implement if elected?

I agree that standardized testing is a waste. Availability of assessment resources can be helpful to meet the student's individual needs. We will cancel EQAO assessments to ensure students and teachers can focus on the learning recovery post-pandemic and work closely with educators and experts to develop and implement a new assessment strategy to capture the impact of the pandemic and focus on addressing those and other gaps.

13. In your party's election policy platform, what commitments are in place to work with First Nations, Metis, and Inuit Communities to create a well planned infrastructure that supports education, sustainable housing, and clean drinking water?

Simply put, it is unacceptable that some Ontarians do not have equal access to safe drinking water. No matter where somebody lives in the province, the government has a duty to ensure we all have universal access to the most essential services that we rely on to survive. We will work closely with Indigenous, federal, and municipal government to end all boil water advisories in all First Nations and northern communities in Ontario.

We will ensure the particular childcare needs of Indigenous communities are met in our child care plan through an equitable funding approach for First Nations communities.

We will also work collaboratively with Indigenous housing providers and communities to develop a distinct housing strategy for Indigenous peoples.

As part of our mental health plan, we will invest in Indigenous-led culturally appropriate and trauma-informed mental health supports for Indigenous peoples, including for residential school survivors and their families as work continues to investigate and commemorate former residential school sites across Ontario.

14. What steps will your party take to dismantle colonial practices in education?

Modern curriculum and learning materials that are culturally relevant are central to promoting equity within the publicly funded education system. We will work with educators and communities to review and update the curriculum, learning materials and evaluation tools to ensure that they reflect modern Ontario and highlight the diversity of our province, including the important place of Black and Indigenous peoples in our shared history.

We will increase investment in the teaching of First Nation languages and culture, as well as mandatory learning from K-12 on the painful history of Canada's residential schools.

15. How do you plan to build and sustain a relationship with local education workers?

We will protect the rights of education workers to be heard in evidence-based decision making by reconvening the Education Partnership Table. We'll listen to teachers' federations, unions, associations, school boards, student, and parent groups on the commitments we're making around learning.

If elected, I commit to regular meetings with local education worker's representatives as well as local Board representatives to listen and help bring excellence back to our education system.