

John Del Grande, Toronto Catholic District School Board Ward 7 Trustee

Will you support and respect Ontario's current four publicly funded school boards?

Yes. Ontario Liberals are proud to support the current publicly funded education system, public and Catholic, English and French. Our publicly funded schools are places where children from all backgrounds and cultures come to learn, play and grow together.

Some in Ontario would experiment with the makeup of Ontario's schools. The NDP has openly debated abolishing Catholic education. The PC Party supported a tax credit that directed hundreds of millions of dollars from public classrooms to private schools.

Neither approach best serves our students, and both take attention and commitment away from where it belongs the most: making our strong publicly funded schools even better.

Together with Catholic educators, parents, and children, Ontario Liberals have invested in our schools. Class sizes are down, test scores are up, more students are graduating, and Full Day Kindergarten is coming to every Ontario classroom. Instead of our students losing 26 Million learning days to cuts and chaos, our students have benefited from 8 years of peace and stability in schools. We don't support eliminating Catholic education like the NDP, or giving public funding to private schools like the PCs. We do support making one of the world's best school systems even better.

Will you support and be vocal for stable long-term education funding?

Yes. A strong education system is the best way of strengthening our economy and our province. Ontario Liberals want our young people to have every opportunity to achieve their potential and build a bright future. We've changed the funding formula every year since 2003, based on the advice and input of partners like trustees. Funding for education has increased over \$6.6 Billion since 2003, at a time when enrolment has dropped by over 120,000 students. That new funding has helped our schools hire new teachers, purchase new textbooks, renovate and upgrade classrooms, and bring Full-day kindergarten to Ontario. At Toronto Catholic, funding has increased by \$285 Million since 2003, a 42% increase, while enrolment has decreased almost 7% over the same time. Our investments are supporting over 550 new teachers, almost 2,300 children in Full-day kindergarten this fall, and 99% of primary classes now with 23 kids or less. We continue to invest in stable, long term funding for Toronto Catholic DSB and other school boards to best support students.

Will you work with all levels of government to ensure that school buildings are treated and funded as shared public assets for the benefit of the entire community?

Yes. Ontario Liberals believe our schools are the hubs of our communities. We will continue to work with municipalities and the federal government to support high quality publicly funded education. We have taken action to ensure community groups can benefit from their local community school. Ontario Liberals created the Community Use of Schools program to help reduce fees and make schools more accessible after hours and on weekends for community groups. The NDP and PCs have never made this a priority, and never had a program like it. In fact, fees steadily rose under the PCs, making it harder for local community groups to find space to run programs. Every school board participates, and fees to rent and use schools have dropped. The PCs would be forced to make deep cuts to fill their \$14 Billion platform hole and community use programs would be among the first cuts. We believe working together to build stronger communities is important. We will continue to support community schools and will continue to invest in stronger community schools.

Will you support amendments to the Education Act allowing school boards to use options to use education development charges for building construction in addition to solely land acquisitions today?

We are always open to discussing plans and ideas like this, but we have no plans to make changes regarding education development charges.

Will you support amendments to the Municipal Conflict of Interest Act, ensuring provincial enforcement including streamlining the process of dealing with complaints from the public?

Ontario Liberals believe in openness, transparency and accountability. We expanded the powers of the Auditor General to include school boards. We also gave the Ontario Ombudsman the ability to police whether school board trustees are conducting open, public meetings appropriately. The PCs voted against those initiatives. We are always open to discussing and ideas to improve openness and transparency.

Would you support more local school board management and autonomy including policy, curriculum, and education models?

Ontario Liberals strongly support our school boards. Working together, we have been able to make Ontario one of the best school systems in the world. Students are graduating at record levels: 81% of kids graduated last year, up from just 68% in 2003. 69% of students can read, write and do math at the provincial standard, up 15% from 2003. That's due to the hard work and effort of our students, educators and parents. Ontario Liberals will continue to support Ontario's parents, students and educators by ensuring they all benefit from strong programs right across Ontario, including Full-day kindergarten, smaller class sizes, 20 minutes of daily physical activity, banning junk food from schools, and others. We support and believe in local decision-making, but

Ontario Liberals also believe that every Ontario student should benefit from excellent programs and supports, regardless of where they live in Ontario.

Will you support introduction and funding to establish an office of the ombudsman for school boards?

We support openness, transparency and accountability at school boards. Schools boards can currently choose to establish their own publicly accountable Ombudsman positions and offices. We believe that school trustees are in the best position to choose if this is the best approach for their own school board.

Will you support amendments to Bill 177 ensuring proper accountability for families and students?

Ontario Liberals changed the law to make student achievement the number one priority of school boards. We believe investing in education is the best way to strengthen Ontario's economy and create jobs. Bill 177, the Student Achievement and School Board Governance Act, enabled boards to set a Code of Conduct for trustees, establish audit committees, and clarified the roles and responsibilities of Trustees, Education Directors and School Board Chairs. We are always open to discussions about additional ways to help students succeed.

Will you support legislation extending parliamentary immunity current provided to MPs and MPPs to municipal politicians while in their chambers or board rooms to ensure protection and integrity of the political process?

We support open, transparent and accountable government, and have no plans to extend immunity to municipal politicians.

Do you support continued standardized testing of student in various aspects of the curriculum?

Yes. We agree with parents, who support standardized testing because it can help their son or daughter do better at school. Using EQAO information, schools and school boards work with us to targets supports to help struggling students improve, and help share examples of successful schools and classes with others. When Ontario Liberals were first elected in 2003, the PC Party was failing our families. Barely half of kids could read, write and do math at the provincial standard. Today, after hard work together with parents, students and educators, test scores have risen 15% to 69%. We have come a long way, but we have more to do until we reach our goal of 75%. Our record on international tests shows Ontario students are now among the best in the world. We're going to continue to support gathering the information and helping Ontario students move forward.

Will you support the continued funding and research for Special Education students including programs such as Arrowsmith?

We believe every child, especially those with special needs, deserves the support they need to succeed at school. Since 2003, we have invested almost \$900 more in special education, a 55% increase. That investment is helping more children get service, hire new staff, bring new supports like ABA therapy in schools for children with autism, and other improvements. Funding is up \$40 Million at the Toronto Catholic DSB, helping more Toronto families receive the services they need for their children. We will continue to support students, and help every student succeed.