

Green Party Candidate Nicole Charlwood's Response to Questions Submitted by the Board of Education of School District No. 8 (Kootenay Lake)

1. What specific strategies will you implement to eliminate employment barriers for Early Childhood Educators and Education Assistants, and how do you plan to support professional development opportunities to create a more diverse and inclusive workforce in our schools?

We are well aware that the K-12 and childcare sectors in BC are struggling to attract and retain qualified staff, particularly in rural and remote areas. In our platform we address this directly, we must:

- Provide paid final practicums for teachers and Early Childhood Educators (ECEs), offering financial support during their essential training periods.
- Simplify the certification process for teachers from other provinces or countries to attract more qualified educators to BC.
- Develop bursaries for educators who commit to serving in remote districts and increase funding for rural and remote teacher education programs to address workforce shortages.
- Ensure Educational Assistants (EAs) receive fair compensation and increased hours, ensuring they earn a living wage and have job security.
- Pursue loan forgiveness programs for teachers, ECEs, and EAs as part of broader post-secondary support initiatives (see: Post-Secondary Education section).

We would only add that the point on inclusivity you raise is also crucial. Reducing financial barriers to getting training and opening up more positions is the first step in bringing in a more inclusive group of educators into our school system.

2. Given the urgent need for increased Annual Facilities Grants and equitable capital funding, how will you advocate for a comprehensive funding strategy to address maintenance in aging school facilities, particularly in rural and remote communities.

Underfunding our public school system has been devastating over the past two decades, and we must move fast to maintain the system.

While there have been recent increases to operating grants, the current BC NDP government is still not spending enough. We are a wealthy province, and BC Greens believe we can put more resources into the people and facilities we need for an excellent education program.

- 3. What commitments will you make to ensure adequate funding for programs support new immigrant and refugee students, as well as neurodiversity training for educators, to foster an inclusive environment that meets the needs of all students.**

Equity and fairness are core values that all our public policy must address, and that includes fairness in education. More resources need to be allocated for the higher needs and special programs necessary in both cases of newly arriving students and their families and neuro diverse students. It's a matter of fairness.

Many public services have been neglected in recent decades of tax cutting and austerity. This has created great inequity in access and quality of our education offerings, like health care and many other areas. BC Greens will push strongly to rebalance the priorities to be sure we progress again to excellence in education, health care and all our public services so all British Columbians can benefit.