

	GREEN PARTY-Françoise Raunet (VESTA member)	NDP-George Chow	LIBERAL-David Grewal
Questions on the Issues			
As an MLA, what will you do to help improve the safety of teachers' working conditions in Vancouver?	<p>I am a teacher and VESTA member, and this is one of the main reasons I am running this time. One of the biggest problems with the school reopening plan is that public health decisions have been downloaded onto school staff without providing enough training and guidance to make those decisions. How should I arrange my desks? Is it OK to use a fan in the classroom? As a language teacher, singing is a hugely important part of my instructional strategies—can my students safely sing if they are wearing masks? As teachers, our default is to protect the emotional and social needs of our students—we aren't necessarily thinking about paths of disease transmission. I wish that every school in the province had been assigned a health department liaison at the start of the school year who could help us answer questions and ensure that our procedures are compliant with the intentions of the PHO. Also, I would like every school to be offered at least two large event tents to put on the school grounds for outdoor learning in the rain (obviously if a school feels like this would not be appropriate given the size/shape of their facilities, this would not be imposed—it's meant to help, not hinder). It's probably too late for this school year, but we should also have looked into leasing vacant retail space around schools and hiring extra teachers so that we could have created smaller classes with appropriate physical distancing from the get-go (really this should have all been done over the summer—it is beyond frustrating that plans were still changing in the first week of school. Our government officials had months to prepare and then imposed a plan at the last minute and left schools to figure out what that would look like).</p>		
Do you support increasing education funding in both K-12 and Adult Education to ensure provincially mandated expenses are covered and that BC schools are funded to at least to the national average? If yes, what actions will you take to ensure a positive outcome?	<p>Absolutely! It is appalling that education in our province continues to be so poorly funded, regardless of whether the BC Liberals or the BC NDP are in power. When I graduated from high school in 1992, the Ministry of Education received around 20% of total government spending. Today that number hovers around only 11% of total expenses. It is clear that successive governments have made education less of a priority for government spending year-after-year.</p>		

<p>What will your party do to ensure our district can recruit and retain more certified teachers?</p>	<p>To start, the Greens have promised to fund schools to 100% of the 2019/2020 school year, even if current enrollment figures have dropped. This will ensure that no teachers are laid off due to divisions being combined because students have opted not to come back this year. Also, teachers who have already been laid off will hopefully be re-hired. The problem of teacher retention is dire. Every school in Vancouver knows that there are frequently not enough subs to cover absences, which means that resource and other non-enrolling teachers get pulled away from the students who need them. Especially this year, when we have heard loud and clear that we shouldn't go to work if we are even mildly sick, this creates a huge amount of unnecessary stress for teachers and students. Raising teacher salaries so that they are more reflective of local costs of living and so that they are on the higher end of the Canadian average would be one way to attract more teachers to BC. Also, the Greens plan to increase the availability of affordable housing by building more housing coops, creating a capital fund to allow non-profit organizations to take over the management of existing rental buildings, closing loopholes that make it too easy for housing to be used as an investment by speculators, and building more "missing middle" housing—townhomes and family-sized apartments, will hopefully go a long way to making housing more affordable and making it easier for school districts to attract teachers from other provinces to our region.</p>		
<p>Do you support a specific leave for COVID-19 in these circumstances? If yes, what actions will you take to ensure a positive outcome?</p>	<p>Yes, I do support this. No one should feel obligated to go to work when sick because they may not be paid if they don't. I would work with the federal government to access federal funds, since they have already expressed their commitment to this in principle.</p>		
<p>Do you support eliminating the Foundation Skills Assessment? If yes, what actions will you take to ensure a positive outcome?</p>	<p>The current FSA is a ridiculous waste of time for the teachers and students who are obligated to stop regular classroom activities for it. The results are not used in any meaningful way, the tests are done at a time in the year when students may not even have completed the units on the skills being assessed, and worst of all, the results are used by the Fraser Institute to create a misleading "ranking" of schools that is widely interpreted by parents (and realtors!) to indicate the relative quality of instruction. If schools or regions of the province where test results were low received extra funds or something, then I might see the value in this test—looking for systemic weaknesses and targeting funds to those areas most in need—but that's not how the test is used.</p>		
<p>Many teachers and students, in both K-12 and Adult Ed, have been speaking out about the systemic and overt racism happening in our communities and our schools. What is your strategy to address these issues?</p>	<p>Though we are making progress in addressing racism in BC schools, it is a sad truth that it is still alive and well in the classrooms and halls of many BC schools today. We need a province-wide anti-racism strategy that identifies systemic barriers to education and participation for BIPOC and come up with strategies to remove them. Also, we need a hiring strategy that will increase the representation of members of equity-seeking groups among teachers, administrators and other school staff. We also need to provide all the necessary resources for teachers to receive anti-racism training.</p>		

<p>What steps do you believe need to be taken in order to ensure a respectful bargaining process going forward?</p>	<p>We need to replace the high-level ministerial and BCPSEA staff who were hired under the BC Liberals with new employees who are committed to the hard-fought-for class size and composition language in our collective agreement in order to reduce class sizes and improve learning conditions for all students.</p>		
<p>How will you work with Vancouver Elementary Teachers' Association to ensure that public education issues are part of your caucus' and party's priorities?</p>	<p>As a VESTA member myself, I am committed to keeping in touch with the union to address issues as they arise and deal with (and resolve) the systemic underfunding of education.</p>		
<p>In Student Vote campaigns, children frequently indicate that fighting climate change is their top concern. If elected MLA what actions will you, or your party take to fight climate change?</p>	<p>In my opinion, the BC Greens are the only credible party on this issue, as they have been fighting hard to protect ecosystems, and deal with climate change & the global extinction crisis for over 35 years. If elected, I will push for a hard target to be carbon-neutral by 2045 (at the latest), to ensure industry deals with their fair share of emissions, and to immediately end all public subsidies to the oil and gas industries.</p>		