

	NDP-Niki Sharma	GREEN PARTY-Bridget Burns	LIBERAL-Alex Read
Questions on the Issues			
As an MLA, what will you do to help improve the safety of teachers' working conditions in Vancouver?	<p>The September safe school restart guidelines were developed in consultation with teachers, parents, administrators, trustees and public health officials and it is the BC NDP's expectation that these guidelines are being followed by districts. \$288 million in combined provincial and federal funding is being distributed to districts for the 2020/21 school year for COVID-19 related resource needs. These funds have gone towards technology upgrades, as well as hiring more teachers and support staff to better support alternative learning options. To date more than 600 new teachers have been hired, as well as nearly 100 new education assistants.</p> <p>A re-elected BC NDP government will make an additional investment of \$46.2 million for a total of \$344.2 million in funding. We understand that district needs differ across the province, so through our education partner COVID-19 working group that includes parents, teachers, administrators, trustees and public health professionals, we remain committed to navigating any issues or concerns that arise during this school year and beyond.</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>In 2020/21, we are investing an extra \$166 million to operate K-12 schools, for a total Education budget of \$6.7 billion. This school year, districts will receive an estimated \$627.4 million to support students with special needs, a \$162.8-million (35%) increase since 2016-17. Our government also restored tuition-free Adult Basic Education and English Language Learning. We recognize that we have more work to do to reverse the years of cuts, and a re-elected John Horgan government remains committed to increasing support to school districts to continue to deliver a world class public education.</p>		
What will your party do to ensure our district can recruit and retain more certified teachers?	<p>By fighting publicly with teachers, ripping up contracts and repeated cuts to funding, the BC Liberals waged a war against public education in this province for more than a decade. It made young people think twice about entering the profession and those already delivering a world class education in BC were pushed to the brink. But the BC NDP made different choices when forming government. We made our province's public education system a priority and made historic investments into capital and operating budgets which has led to the smallest class sizes in a generation. We've invested \$2 billion into more than 100 new school capital projects across the province. We've increased operational funding to record levels. While we have more work to do to reverse the course of the previous government, we are committed to making this province an attractive place for those who seek education as a profession.</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>Even prior to the pandemic, John Horgan and the BC NDP were vocal in their advocacy for an enhanced national sick leave program. When the pandemic hit, John Horgan reached out to Prime Minister Trudeau to renew his call for a national program and in July the federal government announced a \$1.1 billion national program that will give 10 days of paid sick leave to all British Columbians. A re-elected BC NDP will continue to work with the federal government to implement this program in the province as soon as possible.</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 BC NDP cancelled the Foundation Skills Assessment scheduled for this Fall as we felt that it was important for educators and students to have greater capacity to adapt to the changes that a school year during a pandemic has brought. We realize it's important that student progress is monitored by teachers, administrators, parents and the Ministry of Education. A re-elected BC NDP commits to continue the conversation with our education partners on whether the Foundation Skills Assessment is the best way to monitor that progress.</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>Equality, anti-racism, and human rights are priorities for the BC NDP. Some of our government's proudest moments include bringing back the Human Rights Commission, eliminated by the BC Liberals, and introducing the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act. We are proudly committed to enhancing and strengthening initiatives and curriculum in BC schools that promote Diversity and Inclusion and Anti-Racism as well as SOGI education. In the last three years the BC NDP implemented a new First Nations history curriculum and expanded course offerings in Indigenous languages. There are 17 First Nations languages that have been approved to be taught in schools and six more in development. We also led the way as the first jurisdiction in Canada with a tripartite agreement to ensure equitable education for First Nations students, no matter where they live. We also commit to paving the way for race-based data collection to help modernize sectors like policing, healthcare and education and work with stakeholders to create a new Anti-Racism Act that better serves everyone in BC.</p>		

<p>What steps do you believe need to be taken in order to ensure a respectful bargaining process going forward?</p>	<p>It is key to have a government that believes in and supports our public education system and in working with teachers - not fighting them - to create the best learning environment for our kids. The BC NDP believe that a strong public education system is the best way to ensure a fair and equitable society where opportunities are equal regardless of financial status. The BC NDP put in place the Sustainable Services Negotiating Mandate in December 2018 that works to balance the need for improved services for people, with fair compensation for public sector workers. We've made record investments into BC's education system over the last three years, which has led to the largest capital and operating budgets in the province's history. We understand we have more work to do and the BC NDP remains committed to working with our education partners to address any concerns or issues that arise.</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>We believe that open lines of communication and being seated at the table together are integral to working through issues and concerns in a constructive and beneficial manner for all parties. If elected, we commit that the Vancouver Elementary Teachers' Association will have open access to us and our offices and can bring any issues or concerns to our attention, and we promise to strongly advocate for them amongst my colleagues and party. We believe the best outcomes are met with a collaborative attitude towards problem solving.</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>John Horgan and the BC NDP know the climate crisis is the global challenge of our time. We owe it to people today, and future generations to do our part. Our approach is very different from the BC Liberals, who abandoned action and gave up on meeting BC's climate targets. We worked closely with Dr. Andrew Weaver to develop the strongest climate action plan in North America. A re-elected BC NDP government will bring in new legislation to ensure we achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. Some of the ways we will do this is by investing in made-in-BC carbon technology, requiring greener buildings and expanding our zero-emissions vehicle program from passenger vehicles to industrial ones. We will keep working hard to fight climate change and make life better for people.</p>		