

Your Choice 2014

NBTA News Special Election Insert

NBTA's 6200 members support various political parties. The Association itself, however, maintains a non-partisan approach to NB provincial elections. We do endeavor to assist members in making informed choices.

In June 2014, all five registered NB political par-

ties were contacted and sent a list of questions about education issues. The questions were developed with the input of the NBTA Board of Directors and Executive Committee. The questions, background provided by the NBTA, and the responses received are included in their entirety below.

1. Funding/Support for K-12 Education

The NB Budget for Elementary and Secondary Education has had annual increases of only a combined total of 1.6% over past 4 years (Source - NB Budget: Main Estimates)

2011-12: 0.7% 2012-13: 0.1% 2013-14: 0.2% 2014-15 0.6%

Therefore, increases in services/supports for some students and programs have been at the expense of others.

Explain how your party will significantly increase the portion of the EECD annual budget for Elementary and Secondary Education in order for students to receive the resources and supports they require?



The David Alward government has continued to increase investment in Elementary and Secondary education over the last 4 years despite the budget pressures. Education and Early Childhood Development has been one of the Departments able to continue its commitment to strengthening an inclusive education system where students receive the supports they need to be successful. There are always choices to make in setting priorities; the PC Party believes that education and innovation best positions our future generation and the future of our Province for prosperity and the quality of life we deserve.

Priority investments are mapped out in the foundation plans that have recently been developed "Strengthening Inclusion, Strengthening Schools", "The Linguistic and Cultural Development Policy: A Societal Project for the French Education System" and "Provincial Education Plans (2013-16) for the anglophone sector". Critical investments and implementation can be accelerated as the Province's financial situation improves.

Now that the re-organization of the system is behind us, the focus must be on the quality of the education. While it is important to continue seeking cost efficiencies and leveraging opportunities, educators and students must be supported in implementing innovative services and programs.



Under the current Conservative government, some students have suffered because of fiscal restraint that has been applied across the board, with cuts that have hurt in areas such as our classrooms. Education is a top priority for our party and if elected we will immediately bring together a panel of education experts, including teachers, to develop a 10-year education plan that addresses the deficits within our system. Literacy will be a top priority including ensuring every child learns to read. Because the province is in poor financial shape it is important that every dollar be invested wisely. The Liberal party believes one of the wisest investments a government can make is in its education system. Along with literacy our plan includes investing in improving math scores, more opportunities for art, music and physical education, and teaching more things like coding and science and technology and trades so our young people will be well-equipped to fill the types of jobs we will look to attract in New Brunswick in emerging industries with a high potential for growth. While a government must operate efficiently we anticipate investing more in education to meet out commitments in such areas, and ending the process of cutting regardless of the negative impact on our students.



Education is a fundamental priority for the NDP, which includes securing the funding needed to create a world-class education system. Adequate funding for education can be secured via cuts and savings in other areas that government does not do well in, like corporate welfare.

Moreover, an NDP government will not aim to keep education spending growth in line with overall government spending growth, but rather treat education funding as a key focus that ought to receive adequate funding not in relation to the rest of government but for its own sake.



Properly funding the implementation of the inclusion policy is simply a matter of priorities. For it to work for students and teachers, the Green Party would ensure teachers would have a prominent role in identifying the resource needs.



It is clear that the annual increases to the EECD budget over the past four years have been inadequate and have not served the needs of our Elementary and Secondary education system. In the long term, we cannot afford to inadequately fund EECD regardless of our poor economic situation; it is a fact that a better educated population is necessary for a brighter social and economic future in our province.

In order to ensure our children are receiving the best public education possible, we must ensure that EECD receives the resources and supports it requires. This can only happen when the government fully understands what the appropriate level of funding is. We commit to work with stakeholders to determine the appropriate level of funding and develop long term funding projections for EECD (see NBTA priority-commitment to consult).

2. Funding/Support for K-12 Education

Teacher FTEs - Although student enrollment is falling, the demands associated with providing adequate learning opportunities, due to the variety of needs of students in our all-inclusive system, is increasing. Additional supports are required to meet the needs of our learners and to address class composition issues that can negatively impact the learning of students. The Province's own studies (MacKay Report - 2007, Porter-Aucoin Report - 2010) have clearly identified the need for additional supports. Despite those studies, between 2009-2012 there was a loss of 451 FTEs province wide to a current total of 7684.

Explain how your party will commit to maintaining or increasing the number of teacher FTE's (classroom, resource, mentors, guidance, etc.) in order to assist teachers in providing the inclusive, individualized learning and supports for students that are required under EECD policies.



The Liberal party has a number of teachers and educators in our very strong team of candidates and we are well aware of the impact of the loss of FTEs in the classroom. We will make it a top priority to draft a 10-year education plan, with teachers at the table, during the drafting of that plan. Classroom composition, FTEs and the needs of students in an inclusive system will be part of that plan.



The NDP believes that the inclusion model must be enhanced into a full personalization model that provides individualized learning for all students. In other words, all students ought to have personalized learning plans that address their individual strengths and challenges. Some of these provisions will be part of the NDP's Creative Schools Act policy, and further details will be released in our platform. In the interest of fulfilling the previously stated aim, adequate numbers of FTEs will be sought.



The Green Party's policy is to retain existing teaching staff and resources as school enrollment decreases until we attain class sizes at all levels of the school system that represent "best practice" standards in meeting the educational needs of our children.



The current approach of determining the level of teacher FTE's based on student enrolment does not produce the educational environment that our children deserve. It is our belief that resources need to be made available at the district level so that the challenges of classroom composition and the specific needs of the learners can be addressed at the front line of the education system. The level of the required resources cannot be determined solely by legislators. The People's Alliance commits to work with the NBTA and other stakeholders to develop an approach that allows appropriate FTE levels to be determined, taking into account the challenges that exist in our system.



The Progressive Conservative Party shares the goal of providing adequate learning opportunities within our all-inclusive system. The PC Party commits government to work collaboratively with NBTA to fully explore the challenging class composition profile and develop effective and responsive strategies to meet student needs. Given the reality of declining student enrolment and changing student distribution, there is a real opportunity to establish optimum levels of teacher FTEs based on current and future student requirements.

3. Commitment to Consult with NBTA - As a professional association we are committed to cooperating with EECD and government in developing and supporting quality public education. The Objects of our Association, established in our Act of Incorporation, clearly name this as a foundational purpose. Teacher volunteers and the NBTA President and Staff work hand-in-hand with EECD on numerous committees to achieve these goals. Informal individual or small group consultations with educators (social media, conference calls, casual surveys) is not a substitute for formal consultation with our Association, which is specifically structured to gather, process and express the collective professional voice of teachers.

It is important to ensure that the collective voice of teachers is heard on key issues in public education. The NBTA has a democratic system involving close to 500 volunteer and elected teachers at the school, branch and provincial levels. Numerous structures are in place to gather information directly from teachers. They have valuable expertise and day-to-day experiences in our classrooms and schools. Literally, hundreds of meetings take place each year specifically to gather their input. Elected teacher representatives develop and approve NBTA policies and positions based upon this input.

Although continuously improving the Education system is essential and some recent changes have been beneficial, the sheer volume of revisions/innovations since 2008 has created major pressures. Over the past several years, the education system has been subject to numerous separate initiatives that appear to have been adopted without consideration for their combined impact on the system. It has resulted in a system that is stretched beyond capacity.

Explain how your party will commit to co-creating a comprehensive education plan with all stakeholders (including the NBTA and representatives from other political parties) with long-term goals (at least 10 years) guided by sound pedagogy, research, and the overall practical impacts on all students, schools and staffs.



The NDP has several policies that work towards the co-creation of a comprehensive education plan with the input of all stakeholders. The NDP's Creative Schools Act will, among other features, grant each school community more freedom to determine their teaching methods. The NDP will also build on the work of the McCain Foundation on Early Childhood Education and convene stakeholders to develop a plan for a high-quality, affordable early childhood education system within the first six months of forming government.



The Green Party is committed to ensuring teachers have a prominent role in the development and evolution of educational policy, and in how it is implemented. We would end the practice that has seen every new government institute significant changes in the school system to meet its particular agenda. Pedagogy must be the priority, not politics.

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The People's Alliance believes that politics needs to be removed as much as possible from decision making in regards to education. Too often, governments make changes to the education system for political reasons without fully understanding the impact that these changes will have on the quality of education. A comprehensive education plan can only be achieved when the government is willing to work with the stakeholders on a continuous basis to develop policies, and to understand the impacts of these policies before they are implemented. The government must also work with the stakeholders to review changes to the system to ensure that the policies have the desired effect. Legislators must legislate, but they must do so armed with the knowledge of the full impact of the changes they propose.

In order to accomplish this, the People's Alliance will form a non-partisan legislative committee tasked with developing a long term strategy for EECD in New Brunswick. This committee will work with the teachers associations and the DEC's, as well as parent and student groups, to develop this strategy. The committee will also be tasked with developing a long term projected funding arrangement for EECD that will overlap the election cycles. This funding recommendation will be submitted to the legislature one year after each election.

The legislative committee would also be tasked with reviewing all major changes that are made to the education system in New Brunswick. This includes policies that are currently implemented as well as ones that are being proposed. We believe that there should also be a "buffer" period of at least one year between when a particular change is proposed and when it is implemented. During this period of time the legislative committee will gather information from representatives from the teachers associations, the DEC's, as well as student and parent groups to determine the effect of the proposed change. At the end of this process the committee will report its findings to the legislature. Once implemented, policies will be reviewed using milestones developed by the committee. During the review process the legislative committee can recommend the termination or extension of these policies.

This process will complement any other review of the education system commissioned by the government (such as the MacKay Report - 2007, Porter-Aucoin Report - 2010).



The Progressive Conservative Party commits to co-creating a comprehensive and long-term education plan with all stakeholders (at least 10 years) and ensuring teachers have a real voice in the process. It is important to involve teachers and experts and make decisions informed by research and impact analysis.



Our commitment to drafting a 10-year plan includes having teachers and the NBTA at the table during the drafting of that plan. We will rely on the experts, the educators and those with a strong knowledge of the education system to draft that plan. As you mention in your background there have been a number of well-intentioned initiatives in education over the past six years but with the lack of an overall plan and direction for education, the system has become stressed. One thing this plan will include is a comprehensive literacy strategy. This will not be the sole responsibility of our education system as the strategy will also extend to communities and the private sector.

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4. Commitment to Consult with NBTA

Teachers and administrators frequently identify student attendance as a priority issue. Some schools have as much as 25% of their students missing more than 20 school days per year. Absenteeism has its greatest impact on society's most vulnerable students at all age levels and has lifelong effects.

In November, 2012, NBTA participated in an EECD hosted, multi-departmental meeting on this issue. NBTA followed up with a major forum on the issue involving 65 participants from 17 diverse groups, including five NB government departments. Since then, however, efforts have stalled. NBTA stands ready to participate, but does not control the Education system, much less the other departments and agencies required to assist in finding solutions.

How will your party commit to addressing the key issue of student absenteeism?



The Green Party would look to teachers and school administrators for the best approach to address student absenteeism, drawing on the outcomes of the NBTA forum on the topic.



Absenteeism is a problem that we recognize is extremely difficult to resolve in practice. This is due to the fact that the underlying reasons for absenteeism are varied and multifaceted; as a result, addressing the issue will take time and effort from all of the stakeholders.

PANB ultimately believes that perceived value is the best way to reduce student absenteeism. We commit to ensuring that the quality and content of our public education is seen as having maximum value, by parents and students, for the time invested in attending.



Student absenteeism should be of great concern to all of us. Attendance is a basic element for student learning and our Party applauds NBTA for the leadership shown on this issue. The Progressive Conservative Party commits to re-ignite efforts and work collaboratively with educators.

The PC Party supports the full implementation of the Integrated Services Delivery model for at-risk youth and children which will result close collaboration among team members and participating departments (i.e. Education and Early Childhood Development, Social Development, Health, Public Safety, school districts and Regional Health Authorities). One of the ISD outcomes identified is lower absenteeism.



The Liberal party recognizes that this is a priority issue for teachers and administrators. This is a complicated issue that extends beyond the classroom into the homes of our young people. This is not just an issue for one government department. While the issue is not specifically addressed in our platform we can commit to revisiting the meetings held over the past two years by EECD and the NBTA in an effort to address absenteeism. If progress is stalled in this area we will find out why and address it. We do intend through our education plan and certain initiatives to better engage our students in the classroom but as noted, this is an issue that is multilayered.



The NDP acknowledges the problem with truancy in New Brunswick schools and our lack of anti-truancy standards. In the interest of addressing this matter, we will develop anti-truancy initiatives to keep kids in the classroom.

5. Commitment to Consult with NBTA

Teachers are on the frontline and have one of most important responsibilities in the province. They are professionals, devoted to the learning of ALL students. Decisions or changes made by government can profoundly impact their ability to support and provide services for this province's children.

Please identify and explain any major changes/initiatives in New Brunswick public education your party intends to undertake.



The People's Alliance believes that too many major changes have been made to the education system in the past decade. This is why our primary priority will be to set up a legislative committee that will be tasked to work with stakeholders to develop a long term strategy for EECED and review changes that are proposed or have been made to the system.

Several of the initiatives that we would like to implement over the next four years are:

1. End social passing. Move towards a system where the parent and teacher determine whether a child should move forward.
2. Address the lack of mental and physical health services in our schools.
 - Require a minimum of 1/2 hour of physical activity per day in the schools. Place an emphasis on trying a variety of physical activities. Give teachers discretion in determining what physical activity is best for their class.
 - Initiate discussions with health care professionals to determine the most effective and efficient way to maximize the health and well-being of our children while they are in school.
 - Develop a framework that will bring together health care professionals to address issues in the schools in consultation with parents.
3. Begin to re-introduce trades into the curriculum
4. Improve access to French immersion:
 - Maintain the early immersion entry point at grade 3.
 - Initiate a review of all French second language programs through the legislative committee.
 - Ensure access to French immersion is available in all regions of the province where there are enough interested students to implement the system.
 - Investigate alternative second language training for children in schools or regions where the demand for immersion is too low to implement in full.

As a government we would work with the stakeholders to examine the impact and effectiveness of these initiatives before they are implemented.



The Progressive Conservative Party recognizes that parents, educators and experts need to be engaged in the process of improving our education system to prepare our children for the challenges of tomorrow.

The PC Party supports recent government efforts to re-structure the education system and move forward with significant plans to advance quality education in New Brunswick. We commit to implementation of three significant plans developed collaboratively and recently announced:

- Strengthening Inclusion, Strengthening Schools
- The Linguistic and Cultural Development Policy: A Societal Project for the French Education System
- Provincial Education Plans (2013-16) for the anglophone sector

In addition, prudent management of the system will be enhanced through multi-year operational budgets, a long-term infrastructure strategy and the development of a long-term education strategy.

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Some of the major initiatives (10-year plan, focus on literacy) have been mentioned above. Other initiatives include

- Opportunities to learn coding and ensure learning related to emerging industries in our economy
- Better enrichment options for gifted students
- Making early detection of learning disabilities and challenges a priority
- More exposure to the trades
- Improving career counseling
- Early French immersion entry point of Grade One

We recognize that changes will have an impact on our teachers and the Liberal party is committed to working closely with the NBTA to improve our education system. We'll keep you informed and rely on your counsel to move New Brunswick's education system forward and become a smarter province that produces students that will help our province grow and prosper in the future.



The new NDP will introduce the Creative Schools Act, giving each school community more freedom to choose the curriculum elements that deal with teaching methods rather than outcomes, including materials and activities that will best help children meet the provincial standards for each grade.

We will work with District Education Councils to create more Extended Learning Opportunities after school and in summer. This will include expanded intramural sports so more children can be active in a wider range of skill levels. We will also guarantee funding to the Elementary Literacy Friends program for all four years of our mandate.

We will expand access to the International Baccalaureate certification to allow high school students more opportunities for advanced learning.

We will work with universities and the NBCC network to allow more dual-credit courses for Grade 12 students.

We will end the no-fail provincial policy and allow teachers and parents to make the best individual decision for the students. This will include developing an individual learning plan for each student.

We will reverse Conservative cuts to literacy, art, music and physical education teaching positions.

We will amend the Education Act to end political interference with District Education Councils in issues of hiring, school closures and budgeting.

We will expand trades, service learning and co-operative learning opportunities for middle and high school students.

We will increase support for student-led efforts to reduce bullying in schools and increase the number of guidance counsellors in middle schools.

We will develop anti-truancy initiatives to keep our kids in the classroom.

We will work with teachers, parents and students to strengthen curriculum and classroom support for civics education and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics) Education.

We will work with DEC's, principals and communities to ensure a school technology plan exists for each New Brunswick school.



The Green Party would institute a family centred literacy program in our elementary schools to provide parent and child time at school, drawing on the experience gained from the program already piloted in selected Saint John neighbourhoods.

The Green Party is also committed to expanding trades and other skills-based curricula in middle and high schools.

For those children with special needs, who are unable to function successfully in the regular classroom, even with increased resources and staffing, we would establish alternative education settings within the schools.