

Vernon Monashee Teachers Survey

Response from BC Liberal Candidate Eric Foster

1. As an MLA, what will you do to help improve the safety of educators' working conditions in Vernon Monashee Community? Right now, our members are facing concerns about proactive contact tracing and even just feeling safe within the cohort system that is falling short to do justice to the pandemic needs. How do you intend to address this post election?

We will upgrade K-12 facilities so they are properly equipped, build schools across the province, and expand new construction in areas with rapid population growth. This builds on a record of \$4.5 billion in capital funding invested in schools by BC Liberal governments since 2001, which include \$1.4 billion in new and improved schools and \$500 million in seismic upgrades since 2011.

2. BCPSEA shares a challenging bargaining history with BC educators. This remained evident to educators in the last round of contract negotiations. What does your party propose to do to ensure the best possible outcome for BC students and educators? Would your party consider reorganizing this team for the coming rounds of bargaining?

Now, more than ever, we need to ensure that there are consistent learning options for students across our province. We will ensure there are options for regular school in a safe setting during the pandemic, including hybrid and online, whether in a public school, independent school or via online learning or Independent Distributed Learning. This would mean adequate funding for the teaching positions needed to teach students in these various environments.

3. Do you support increasing education funding 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?

Especially at a time like this, we are committed to improving students' and teachers' health and safety, by implementing a province-wide framework for hybrid and online learning options. This includes restoring the \$12 million the NDP cut from Independent Distributed Learning programs. We will upgrade K-12 facilities to ensure they are properly equipped. We will build schools across the province, and expand new construction in areas with rapid population growth.

4. Our school district is facing serious recruitment and retention issues and there is a sustained teacher shortage in the Vernon-Monashee region. We have had many classrooms with no educators and specialised positions remain unfilled for many terms. What will your party do to ensure our district can recruit and retain more certified educators?

Especially at a time like this, we are committed to improving students' and teachers' health and safety so everyone can feel confident in our K-12 system. Part of our plan will be to implement a province-wide framework for hybrid and online learning options. This includes restoring the \$12 million the NDP cut from Independent Distributed Learning programs. We will upgrade K-12 facilities to ensure they are properly equipped. We will build schools across the province, and expand new construction in areas with rapid population growth.

5. In the Vernon Monashee area, many educators do not have enough sick leave to stay home if they are told to self isolate because of a COVID-19 exposure or if they are experiencing COVID-19-like symptoms. Do you support a specific leave for COVID-19 in these circumstances? If yes, what actions will you take to ensure a positive outcome?

We believe federal support is needed to fund any national sick leave program in response to this pandemic.

6. The Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) does not help students learn or educators teach and the results are misused by a private organization. What is your position on eliminating the FSA?

Right now our focus needs to be on ensuring safe, secure learning options for students during the pandemic. In light of the NDP's inability to ensure consistent learning options for students across the province – and the challenges this has brought forward for teachers, staff, students, and parents – we believe the FSAs should be postponed this year.

7. Schools have an impact on the mental health of our students and the people who work in our schools. How do you educate yourself on the needs of people who learn and work in our school system? What will you do to see that appropriate supports are available within our school communities?

At a time like this youth mental health is a concern. This is why a BC Liberal government will increase mental health supports in public secondary schools, such as registered psychiatric nurses. Additionally we will expand Foundry Centres.

8. Our Education system, like our other colonial-based public systems, often fails to meet the needs of Aboriginal learners and their communities. How will you support educators and the system within which we work to better understand the needs of our Aboriginal learners and provide the necessary support for them to succeed within a system that was not designed by or for them?

Discrimination due to age, sex, gender, race, or economic status has no place in our society. We were concerned with the recent allegations of racism towards Indigenous patients in the BC healthcare system We will work with the First Nations Health Authority to eliminate systemic racism from the health care system. We look forward to having conversations on how we can also make our schools more inclusive places.

9. How will you work with the Vernon Teachers' Association and the BCTF to ensure educators' concerns and issues are part of your caucus' and party's priorities?

I am happy to meet with the VTA at any time and take their concerns to Victoria

10. Racist propaganda has been circulated outside of our schools. There are growing racist attitudes and actions in our community. How does your party plan to address these issues?

Discrimination due to age, sex, gender, race, or economic status has no place in our society. This is why SOGI was introduced under previous BC Liberal governments. Today, we are concerned with the uptick in racism towards Asian-Canadians during the pandemic, and recent allegations of racism against Indigenous Canadians in our healthcare system. This is why we will be requiring our police forces to actively adopt anti-racism and anti-discriminatory conduct policies. We look forward to a discussion on how we can also make our schools more inclusive places.

11. What do you think is the number one issue facing our schools right now and what will you do in the Legislature to help address it?

Safety : Schools must be safe healthy places for students and staff Until people feel safe in the work place they can't be expected to perform to their full potential To make sure students and staff have confidence in their schools the Ministry must make additional resources available to the districts for cleaning ,PPEs and cleaning staff