

### 3. Education - K-12

Public education, including both public and separate schools and school boards, is a cornerstone of democracy. Our society relies on public education to ensure well-educated citizens. It must be accessible to all, regardless of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity/ expression, language, culture, ethnicity, race, income, religion or ability. No one should be turned away. Public education must meet the individual needs of all Ontario students, as well as the collective needs of society. Programs and services must be of high quality and prepare our youth for all aspects of adulthood – active participation in our democratic society, the world of work, parenthood, higher education, and life-long learning.

Public education in Ontario must benefit the individual and society as a whole. Education attainment must not be seen as an advantage provided to individuals. There is benefit to a co-operative approach, within classrooms and in developing programs and policies about public education. We must build on the existing strengths of the present system, enhancing what we have.

#### ***Recommendations for A People's Charter:***

*Public education in Ontario must be built on the following components:*

- ***Accountability that recognizes local decision-making.***
  - *An accountable system ensures all school boards meet the needs of the community, including appropriate community access to facilities. School councils have a role to play in our education system in an advisory role. An education system that is accountable to the students, parents, teachers, and citizens of Ontario has no room for teacher testing. Teachers and education workers believe in ongoing professional development determined by the needs of their job, not based on an arbitrarily imposed regimen.*
- ***Assessment based on the whole child.***
  - *Early intervention is a key concern, as are the services to address the development of the whole child. High-stakes testing, such as the grade 10 literacy tests, should be eliminated. The use of standardized tests would be minimized or eliminated. Test results will not be used to rank students, schools, teachers, or school boards.*

- **Restore bargaining rights that allow for full scope bargaining for all education workers.**
- **Class and school size must meet the needs of students, not the funding formula.**
  - *Class sizes, particularly in the primary grades, must be lower. Research shows there should be no more than 20 students in kindergarten through grade 3 classrooms.*
  - *Even though the benefits of small schools are becoming obvious, the current funding formula is moving in the direction of larger schools. This must be reversed.*
- **Education programs must meet the diverse needs of Ontario.**
  - *Programs should include English as a Second Language (ESL), adult education, special needs education, and trades education.*
  - *Attention must be paid to the diverse needs of Ontario's communities, including heritage language, cultural diversity, and socioeconomic status. Programs must also include anti-violence, anti-racism, and anti-homophobia.*
  - *Full funding must be provided to ensure adequate and appropriate education support materials and resources for all students.*
  - *Intervention programs must be provided in every school to help students who are at risk or who have special needs.*
- **Educational support staff, programs, and services must be mandated and fully funded.**
  - *They must meet the needs of all students in every school. All school boards should provide professional and educational support personnel. Identification and intervention programs and services for students with special needs must be extended to ensure real access to education. Custodial services and maintenance, and the staff who provide them, are essential for all school board facilities and infrastructure.*

- **Privatization of any education services, programs, or facilities must not be tolerated.**
  - *The government must reverse the trend towards:*
    - *contracting out of services*
    - *commercialization of curriculum*
    - *corporate sponsorships*
    - *public-private partnerships*
    - *parental or corporate fundraising to cover essential services and programs*
    - *the inclusion of education in trade agreements*
  
- **Safety of all students and staff must be a prime concern.**
  - *Clean, safe, and healthy schools are an important aspect of our education system and must be properly funded.*
  - *Adequate funding for transportation must be improved. It is unacceptable for students to spend up to two hours each way on the school bus.*
  - *Programs to eliminate bullying must be seen as important and be fully funded.*
  
- **Funding must meet all the needs of a publicly-funded education system.**
  - *Funding cuts over the past six years must be restored. A new, stable model of funding must be developed and implemented.*
  - *Local school boards must be given limited taxation powers to help address local needs.*
  - *The tax credit for private schools must be eliminated immediately. Public funding must be for public schools, not for private institutions.*