

Green Party Candidate Donovan Cavers' Response to Questions Submitted by the Board of Education of School District No. 8 (Kootenay Lake)

- 1. What specific strategies will you implement to eliminate employment barriers for Early Childhood Educators and Education Assistants, and how do you plan to support professional development opportunities to create a more diverse and inclusive workforce in our schools?**

As a teacher myself I know firsthand the need for well-trained EAs. I have also witnessed the stark contrast between students entering kindergarten who have had nurturing home environments and/or who are privileged to have spent time in ECE programs. As MLA I will work towards **increased** operating funding, especially for school districts who are working towards attracting and retaining trained EAs and ECEs. Post-Secondary programs offering EA and ECE programs also need to be supported to ensure program costs are not a barrier.

- 2. Given the urgent need for increased Annual Facilities Grants and equitable capital funding, how will you advocate for a comprehensive funding strategy to address maintenance in aging school facilities, particularly in rural and remote communities.**

I also know first-hand the immense difference a modern versus an aged building can have on quality of learning. Dedicated staff can always counteract these barriers to some degree, but our goal needs to be thriving educational environments. I've taught this year at Kootenay River Secondary, Mount Sentinel, Trafalgar Middle School and Salmo Secondary. The contrast in the latter two buildings in particular is quite apparent. Well-designed infrastructure, that meets all needs, is critically important. As MLA I will share my firsthand experiences within government to make a strong case for funding to modernize and retrofit infrastructure.

- 3. What commitments will you make to ensure adequate funding for programs support new immigrant and refugee students, as well as neurodiversity training for educators, to foster an inclusive environment that meets the needs of all students.**

Language barriers can significantly hamper the ability for new immigrant and refugee families to feel welcomed in, supported by and connected with our communities in meaningful ways. Supporting neurodivergent students is complex given the inherent demands of teaching already. Appropriate and timely assessment of learning designations which garner enhanced per student funding (A-H) is part of the solution for each district. Communicating to parents the support benefits which accompany these per student funding bumps is also important because stigma still exists. Again, it comes down to funding and making sure funding is directed where it is most needed. You know this better than I. I support increased funding for districts across the province to pursue the needs it has carefully identified in its planning processes.