

NDP KEY COMMITMENT: STOP FORCING PARENTS TO FUNDRAISE FOR SCHOOL ESSENTIALS

location: Toronto

date: September 17, 2007 - 8:30am

body:

Ontario NDP Leader Howard Hampton says every child has a right to an excellent school, properly staffed with the programs they need to learn. Today Hampton announced the NDP's latest key commitment – to stop forcing parents to fundraise for school essentials.

“Hardworking families shouldn’t have to face the burden of raising hundreds of millions of dollars to pay for essential services in their children’s schools,” Hampton said. “All kids should have equal access to the education and the support they need. It shouldn’t depend on the size of a parent’s wallet and their children’s ability to sell chocolate bars.”

“The broken school funding formula is forcing school boards to make more cuts every year to balance their budgets and our children’s education is suffering. Classes are overcrowded, special education and ESL classes are being cut, the number of teachers and teaching assistants are being reduced, arts, sports and after school programs are being cancelled,” said Hampton.

Hampton said that by breaking his promise to fix the funding formula, Dalton McGuinty has dumped millions of dollars in costs on to parents. Parents fundraised \$515 million in 2005-06 often to pay for essentials, including teacher salaries, educational assistants, textbooks, science labs and gyms.

The NDP would make sure schools have the resources they need by carrying out an annual public review of the funding formula – led by an all-party standing committee on education – as the Liberals promised to do four years ago but never delivered. The NDP would also stop making parents reach into their pockets to pay for school essentials by restoring the Local Priorities Grant and

funding it the way the Education Equality Task Force recommended – at a rate of \$200 per student. Children with autism will also get the support they deserve – the NDP will fund Intensive Behavioural Intervention (IBI) services in classrooms and clear the waiting list for autism services.

“Dalton McGuinty got it wrong when he broke his promise to fix the school funding formula. New Democrats will get it right and make sure that all kids have an equal start and get the education they deserve,” said Hampton.