

Confederation of Canadian Unions Questionnaire
NDP Responses

Economics

1. *According to Statistics Canada, economic inequality has been on the rise since the 1970s, and currently, the richest 10% of income earners control almost 60% of all wealth. How will your party reverse this trend and reduce the growing levels of economic inequality in Ontario?*

A. The Ontario NDP agrees that inequality is a huge problem in Ontario. We won a real victory for Ontarians in 2012 by pressuring the Liberals into implementing a more progressive high income tax bracket.

We believe that tax credits need to be more targeted toward achieving a desired goal rather than just corporate give-aways. While the Liberals just want to put \$2.5 billion tax dollars into corporate bank accounts and hope that some jobs will be created.

Our plan is to use tax credits to reward the companies that create jobs in Ontario—it's simple: create a job, get a tax credit.

The Ontario NDP will also implement a minimum wage increase to \$12/hr that will be phased in over two years starting June 1, 2014. Again we will use targeted tax credits to help small businesses handle the impact of the wage increase.

2. *Since 2001, the combined federal-provincial corporate tax rate in Ontario has been reduced from 44 percent to 25 percent, supposedly in order to "create jobs." Yet the unemployment rate in the province today is higher than it was in 2001, while according to the International Monetary Fund, the amount of so-called "corporate dead money" in Canada now stands at over \$625 billion. What concrete policies will your party implement to actually create good-paying, full-time jobs in Ontario?*

A. The Ontario NDP agrees that the dramatic decline in the corporate tax rate has not produced the jobs that the Liberal and Conservative governments promised.

Firstly, we would implement a modest rollback in the Liberals' corporate tax reductions which lowered the corporate tax rate to 11.5% from 14%.

Secondly, we would implement two, separate targeted tax credits that would reward employers for investing in incremental new jobs as well as an expansion tax credit for plants and machinery.

3. *According to opinion polls, a large majority of Ontarians support greater funding for social services like health care, childcare, housing and education. What will your party do to ensure these programs are properly funded in both the short and long term?*

A. The Ontario NDP has always stood up for public health care, affordable childcare, secure housing, and a strong publicly-funded education system. These are priorities for families, and we will ensure that these programs are properly funded now and in the future. We will cut emergency room wait times in half by hiring 250 new nurse practitioners, opening 50 new family health clinics, eliminating wait times for acute long-term care, and creating a five day home care guarantee.

We will stop the Liberal cuts to childcare in 18 communities across Ontario, and provide emergency funding of \$100 million to stabilize the sector. We will index the overall childcare funding to inflation, and provide wage enhancements for early childhood educators. New Democrats have led the fight for proper tenant protections, including elimination of the rent control loophole. We will make additional investments to improve enforcement and protect tenants' rights.

An NDP government will make significant investments in our schools. We will establish a \$60 million annual Open Schools Fund to help prevent local school closures. We will review the education funding formula to ensure that kids are getting the supports they need and to address existing gaps that leave some students behind. We will make significant investments to hire new educational assistants and specialized health and physical education teachers.

Labour

4. *Statistics Canada reports that on average, unionized workers in Ontario enjoy 29% higher wages than non-unionized workers in the same line of work, as well as stronger pensions, superior health and safety standards, longer vacation time, better health and drug benefits, and more rights in the workplace. Does your party believe that unions play a positive role in our economy? If so, what policies will your party implement to create a climate that is easier for unions to organize?*

A. The Ontario NDP has worked with labour groups to put together a practical package of significant labour law reforms. These reforms would help level the playing field in Ontario. Most of these elements were introduced in *Bill 129*, tabled by NDP MPP Taras Natyshak's last fall. Some of the elements are:

- Successor rights in the contract sector – to provide more protection when a business is sold for some of our most vulnerable workers – such as cleaners, food service employees, and the folks who work in laundry facilities.

- The provision of an additional route to binding arbitration on a first contract – this allows either party to request first agreement arbitration if a collective agreement has not been reached within thirty days after it became legal for the employees to strike.
 - Changes in reinstatement procedures during an organizing campaign.
 - Requiring the early disclosure of employee lists to unions from employers.
 - Neutral off-site voting and telephone / electronic voting for union certification.
 - Access to binding arbitration for either party in prolonged strike situations. We would amend the Labour Relations Act so that, if strike or lock-out that has been in progress for more than 180 days, either the employer or the union can ask the Ontario Labour Relations Board to settle the conflict by binding arbitration.
5. *While corporate profits, productivity and GDP have all increased consistently during the past thirty years, Statistics Canada reports that real hourly wages have been stagnant since 1980. Why do you think this has happened, and what does your party propose to change the situation?*
- A. The reduction in corporate tax rates, implemented by Liberal and Conservative governments, combined with a weakening of labour relations and employment standards legislation, has shifted the playing field against working people.

The Ontario NDP will increase the minimum wage, roll back corporate tax cuts, and take a more targeted results based approach to tax cuts. We would also work to strengthen labour relations and employment standards legislation and implement a significant package of labour law reforms, outlined in the previous question.

Health Care

6. *Our publicly administered, universal health care system is cherished throughout Ontario. More of our health services, however, are being de-funded and privatized. What policies will your party implement to ensure that health care in the province remains under public control and is accessible to everyone?*
- A. The Liberal health record leaves much to be desired: 900,000 Ontarians still lacking access to primary care; nine in ten Ontarians wait too long for a family doctor appointment; wait times for home care have tripled since 2005; and wait times in emergency rooms that remain high at an average of 10 hours.

The Ontario NDP will invest in frontline services and place a cap on administrative and executive funding. We will eliminate redundant administrative costs and stop wasteful spending of public money. We will make smart investments in frontline services and preventative health care while ensuring that every Ontarian has access to a primary care provider. And we will ease pressure on hospitals and eliminate the wait list for home care—6100 people currently—working towards a five day home care guarantee. We will increase the number of long-term care beds to eliminate the wait for long-term crisis care beds. This will free up bed space in hospitals for acute care. We will also improve primary care by hiring more ER nurse practitioners and investing in 50 new 24-hour family health clinics.

7. *There are more than 10,000 people in the province on waiting lists for home care, and 400,000 are actively seeking but cannot find a family doctor. What will your party do to fund more doctors, nursing positions and hospital beds throughout the province?*

A. The Ontario NDP will work towards a five day home care guarantee. We would increase funding for the wages of the 34,000 publicly paid personal support workers and support a minimum standard of care so that the health and well-being of seniors are protected. We will ensure our loved ones receive the right care in the right setting and guarantee that our dollars go towards frontline services. We will hire more nurse practitioners to treat and discharge ER patients and will invest in 50 new 24-hour family health clinics.

Education

8. *Only 20% of young children today have access to regulated childcare spaces in Ontario. What will you do in government to create more childcare spaces? Will you commit to investing more in Early Childhood Education in the province?*

A. Only the NDP has a plan to address the high cost of childcare and provide relief for families. We will provide \$100 million in emergency funding to stabilize the childcare sector and stop the Liberal cuts in 18 communities across Ontario. We will provide ongoing mitigation funding, and index overall childcare funding to inflation. As costs rise, so too will funding for childcare.

We will make significant investments in early childhood education by working to close the wage gap and retain qualified staff. Early childhood educators can expect a \$1 per hour average wage increase in 2015 and another \$1 increase the year after that to address their unfair low wages. We will also index the Ontario Child Benefit, which increases to \$1,310 in July 2014, to inflation so that parents see an increase in the benefit amount each year.

These are the important first steps toward building a long-term childcare plan focused on expanding public, non-profit licensed childcare spaces in Ontario.

Only Andrea Horwath and the NDP have a real plan to deliver more affordable, accessible childcare for families.

9. *What specific policies will your party implement to hire more teachers and reduce class sizes in primary and secondary schools in Ontario?*

A. The Liberals put political games ahead of students, and Tim Hudak wants to cut 10,000 jobs in our schools, meaning students won't get the support they need. That just doesn't make sense. The Ontario NDP will restore trust in our schools and restore respect for families, teachers, and educational workers. An NDP government will review the education funding formula to ensure kids are getting the supports they need in their classrooms. We'll put student achievement first by investing in additional resources and educational workers. And we'll create an Open Schools Fund to work with school boards to keep schools open as community hubs.

10. *Ontario university students with loans currently graduate with an average of \$37,000 of debt after a four-year degree, and our province has the lowest rate of public funding for colleges and universities - less than half the per student funding of Alberta. What will your party do to lower tuition fees and reduce student debt?*

A. College and university education has to be affordable, accessible, and high-quality for students. Too many Ontarians cannot afford the high costs of post-secondary education and many are saddled with debt for years on end. We can do better. An Ontario NDP government will freeze tuition fees and make provincial student loans interest-free. These are targeted, affordable steps to start making post-secondary education more affordable and accessible to Ontarians so they can secure good jobs and stable futures.

The Environment

11. *What policies will your party implement to reduce climate change and protect the environment, and how will you pay for them?*

A. The Ontario NDP will invest in low low-carbon public transportation. We will make major investments in public transit to keep cars off the road and reduce greenhouse gas, GHG, emission. New Democrats will also invest in funding for bike networks.

We have a plan to secure green investment by supporting efforts to cap carbon emissions and would work to improve monitoring and reporting of emissions to ensure Ontario can meet emission reduction targets.

In addition, we will make going green at home an affordable option for families and we provide incentives for industries to go green.

12. One of the best ways to reduce our carbon footprint on the environment is public transportation. What will you do to make public transportation throughout the province more affordable and accessible to Ontarians?

- A. The Ontario NDP is committed to kick-starting transit relief by funding new projects and supporting the purchase of new buses. An NDP government will start by delivering clean trains on the air-rail link, funding the transit relief in Scarborough and the Downtown Relief Line, and expanding the GO network with two-way all-day trains to Kitchener-Waterloo and year-round daily service to Niagara Falls. We also strongly support projects like the Hamilton and Mississauga LRTs, and the next phase of Brampton rapid transit. To help all municipalities across the province, we will restore funding for new buses that Kathleen Wynne cut when she was Transportation Minister.