



NDP Responds

Note: We have yet to release our full platform but here are the answers to date outlining our commitments.

Rural Ontario Institute

1. Access to quality medical services nearby is a long-standing concern for rural and small town.

*Ontarians typically some distance from urban facilities and services. What is your party's platform with respect to the **accessibility of health care and quality medical services** near to rural and small town residents? Is the current situation satisfactory? How would your party's approach to a Health Accord and/or the Canadian Health Transfer improve things for rural Ontarians?*

NDP Response: After eight years in government, Stephen Harper's Conservatives have failed to improve public health care. This is simply unacceptable. New Democrats have a practical plan to strengthen public health care, all Canadians deserve the best quality care, regardless of where they live. Tom Mulcair is committed to better home care, long-term care, palliative care and expanded public coverage for prescription drugs. We'll put patients at the centre of primary care, and tackle the social determinants of health while recognizing the importance of mental health. These initiatives will benefit all Canadians—including rural and small town residents.

*2. Rural and small town Ontario has an older demographic than urban places making **services for an aging population, aging in place/home-care/seniors housing** a priority for many. Does your party have a proposed policy agenda that it would implement relevant to a rural/small town context?*

NDP Response: Over the next 25 years, the number of seniors in Canada will double. We need to be ready. But instead of taking action, Stephen Harper's Conservatives raised the age of eligibility for OAS and GIS from 65 to 67.

Tom Mulcair's plan will: strengthen pensions, restore the age of eligibility for OAS and GIS to 65, create a national seniors strategy, expand long-term care and home care and invest in affordable housing that meets seniors' needs. Recently, Tom Mulcair announced that he will raise the Guaranteed Income Supplement to help lift 200,000 seniors out of poverty. There is also a need to address the impacts of government policies, programs and initiatives on rural and remote seniors.

*3. What would your party do to protect the **quality of water in Ontario lakes, streams and rivers**?*

NDP Response: In the last ten years, the Conservatives have dismantled the laws protecting our air, land and especially our water. They've hidden their attacks in budget bills, targeting the Navigable Waters Protection Act, the Environmental Assessment Act, the Species at Risk Act, and the Fisheries Act. Under the Conservatives, Canada went from protecting over 2.5 million lakes and rivers to only parts of 159. The Liberals supported five consecutive Conservative budgets that snuck through attacks on these environmental laws without any real Parliamentary scrutiny or debate.

Tom Mulcair and the NDP will protect waterways, the right to navigation, fish habitat, respect water rights for First Nations and invest in public infrastructure to expand and improve our water and wastewater systems. We will restore the Navigable Waters Protection Act, strengthen and reinstate the Environmental Assessment Act and give the Fisheries Act the powers that have been stripped away.

*4. What is your party's proposed approach to **financing for local municipal infrastructure**?*

NDP Response: Under Stephen Harper, the infrastructure deficit in cities and small towns across the country has been allowed to grow to a staggering \$172 billion. The federal government must become a partner in infrastructure and transit. Tom Mulcair's plan will start to close the infrastructure funding gap by transferring an additional cent of the existing gas tax to municipalities. The NDP is committed to helping small cities and towns offer more transit options and providing long-term investment for roads, bridges and vital infrastructure. We'd transfer funds straight to cities and small towns so projects get off the ground sooner.

*5. Rural Ontario stakeholders are concerned about **youth employment/underemployment** in their communities. How does your party's platform respond to these concerns?*

NDP Response: Conservatives and Liberals have left young Canadians with crippling debt and double-digit unemployment. It's just not fair. With the youngest caucus in history, New Democrats take young people seriously. Over 200,000 more Canadians are jobless today than before the recession and many of those are young people.

Tom Mulcair will invest in small business and manufacturing to create good-quality, well-paying jobs. We'll restore the federal minimum wage and raise it to \$15. We will work with towns and cities to build new roads, bridges and community infrastructure. We will kick-start manufacturing with a new Innovation Tax Credit.

*6. **Poverty and income disparity** have many dimensions and rural incomes are lower on average than urban places. Would a government your party leads take a comprehensive approach regarding a federal role for an anti-poverty strategy? Would it support, for example, new proposals for a Guaranteed Income Supplement? Does your party see a need to adjust current programs such as OAS/CPP/EI/Child Care in order to respond and if so how would this impact rural regions?*

NDP Response: Tom Mulcair is committed to reducing income inequality and poverty—especially to eliminating child poverty. To support achieving these goals, an NDP government will close the tax loophole currently enjoyed by CEOs on stock options. Those funds would be re-directed to low-income families through an enhanced Working Income Tax Benefit and an enhanced National Child Benefit Supplement.

After a decade of Conservative government, Canadian families are paying more than ever for childcare with many paying \$1000 a month — and that's if they can find a space. Stephen Harper promised to create 125,000 new childcare spaces, but he's failed to deliver even one. And even after 12 years in

office, the Liberals still didn't get the job done. Tom Mulcair's NDP has a plan to ensure there's a space for every child by creating or maintaining a million quality childcare spaces. What's more, we'll keep costs for parents at no more than \$15 a day. And, we'll work with the provinces, territories and Indigenous communities to deliver quality early childhood education Canada-wide.

Tom Mulcair's plan includes relief for low income seniors as well. Nearly one third of working Canadians will face a steep drop in their standard of living when they retire. Seven out of ten Canadians don't even have a workplace pension plan. Instead of strengthening public pensions, Stephen Harper raised the age of retirement to 67 and refused calls from Canada's Premiers to bolster the CCP/QPP. And just like the last Liberal government, the Conservatives have done nothing to protect private pensions when companies go bankrupt. Tom Mulcair's plan will boost the Guaranteed Income Supplement and expand the Canada Pension Plan.

Employment Insurance is also a key component of the NDP's plan to reduce poverty. Since 1996, Liberal and Conservative governments have diverted a total of \$57 billion from the Employment Insurance account — while making access to the program for the unemployed more difficult. After promising a different approach, the Conservatives stole billions from the EI Account just like the Liberals before them. This fall, the Conservatives and the Liberals were actually fighting to see who had the best plan to raid the EI fund.

New Democrats are serious about making the EI program work for Canadians and the unemployed. An NDP government will take immediate first steps to begin repairing the damage the Conservatives and Liberals have done to EI. We'll roll back the Conservatives' reckless reform that forces workers to take a 30% pay cut or lose their benefits. And, we'll take further steps to make EI benefits more accessible to the unemployed who need them. The NDP will immediately introduce legislation to make sure that the premiums workers have paid into the Employment Insurance Operating Account can never be stolen again. That's why we introduced Bill C-605, a bill that will help ensure premiums remain affordable while maintaining a healthy EI program that works for the unemployed.

Finally, job creation is an important step to reducing poverty. A good job means being able to give your family a better life. But after ten years, Stephen Harper's plan just isn't working. Canadians are working harder than ever but can't get ahead. Incomes are dropping and household debt is rising. Over 200,000 more Canadians are jobless today than before the recession. The jobs that are being created are part-time and precarious. And Justin Trudeau doesn't have a plan to fix the damage. Tom Mulcair's plan will create jobs and help families get ahead. We'll help local businesses grow by cutting the small business tax rate, and we'll kick-start manufacturing with a new Innovation Tax Credit.

*7. **Municipal financial stability** has been raised by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and likewise is a priority for rural and small town Ontario residents. How would your government deal with cost-sharing between levels of government? What transfers/investment programs do you believe require change or continued support in the coming years? Are taxation powers appropriately balanced?*

NDP Response: Municipalities own 60% of our public infrastructure, yet collect only eight cents of every tax dollar. After years of downloading and neglect, too many municipalities are struggling. Past infrastructure plans have failed to get funding out the door – with complicated application processes and public-private partnership requirements that shut out smaller communities while adding years of

uncertainty and delays to important projects. Tom Mulcair's NDP will respect provincial jurisdiction and local decision-making, simplify application processes and remove funding barriers through direct, stable and transparent transfers to municipalities and provinces for their priorities.

*8. What actions would your government take to ensure **food security** in our country?*

NDP Response: Canadian farmers face rising debt, a changing climate and tough markets. Our government should be there when times are tough for the people who feed Canadian families. Instead, Stephen Harper's Conservatives are getting ready to bargain away supply management for dairy and poultry. And, they cut programs like AgriStability and AgriInvest. Tom Mulcair's NDP will: create a national food strategy, expand risk management programs, support new farmers, protect supply management and rural incomes, invest in food processing and grow local markets.

*9. What does your party think of the current policy regime surrounding **farmland loss** and **farmland protection**? What initiatives do you think a federal government could take to respond to this concern?*

NDP Response: The NDP believes that we must grow farm incomes and ensure that farming remains profitable for producers. We need to address affordability issues on farms and ensure that Business Risk Management tools meet the needs of today's producers. There is a need to provide public and affordable crop, livestock and farm insurance, and to ensure that disaster relief is timely, effective and distributed fairly. It is important to promote best practices to reduce input costs through more efficient, innovative and sustainable equipment and production methods.

We need to ease entrance barriers for new and young farmers and ensure that these farmers can access the capital and land they need to gain entry to the farming sector, including through consultation with all sectors.

It is important to protect the legacy of agricultural land in Canada. Work with provinces, territories and municipalities to prevent both domestic and foreign land speculation. And we must work with the provinces to identify major issues in the future of land use in the Greater Toronto Area.

*10. **Water quantity** and the value of this resource for drinking, irrigation or other human uses is an issue on the minds of rural Ontarians. What would your government do with respect to managing the resource responsibly?*

NDP Response: Our water is the envy of the world. But as our climate changes, we have a responsibility to protect it. Canada is one of the only industrialized countries without a Water Strategy. Instead of fixing that, Stephen Harper's Conservatives have stripped away protections for our lakes and rivers. The Conservatives gutted environmental protections without debate by burying the changes in budget bills. Tom Mulcair's NDP will establish a National Water Strategy and protect clean water as a right, we'll strengthen and enforce drinking water standards, pass laws that make polluters pay, and ban bulk water exports.

Finally, we welcome you to articulate your party's plan or strategy in terms of the implications for rural and small town Ontario where about 2.6 million Canadians live. What do you see as the key rural and small town issues/opportunities that will inform your approach to governing?

NDP Response: Tom Mulcair's commitments to all Canadians directly benefit those living in rural and small towns in Ontario. We have a plan to improve the lives of those living in rural and small towns in Ontario. We're offering improved access to health care, new job creation initiatives, improved food security and programs for farmers and more control over federal money for municipalities. We'll take steps to reduce income inequality and poverty, we'll protect our water supplies, and improve opportunities for youth while ensuring no senior faces retirement in poverty.