

Questions of Importance to Rural and Small Town Ontario for Federal Parties and Candidates (2015)

The ten questions below were developed based on rural stakeholder priorities in response to an on-line survey by the Rural Ontario Institute July 13-24, 2015. A broader list of concerns and their relative ranking on the survey can be viewed at www.ruralontarioinstitute.ca

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?
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?
3. What would your party do to protect the **quality of water in Ontario lakes, streams and rivers**? (See also question # 10 regarding water supplies and resource management.)
4. What is your party's proposed approach to **financing for local municipal infrastructure**?
5. Rural Ontario stakeholders are concerned about **youth employment/underemployment** in their communities. How does your party's platform respond to these concerns?
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?
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?
8. What actions would your government take to ensure **food security** in our country?
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?
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?

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?

