

Anita Khanna
Campaign 2000, c/o Family Service Toronto
128A Sterling Rd. Unit 202, Toronto M6R 2B7

Dear Anita:

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to speak about the challenges that citizens of Ontario are facing across the province. I am happy to respond on behalf of the Green Party of Ontario.

1. In 2009, all parties voted unanimously to pass the Poverty Reduction Act. The Act requires public consultation and development of a Poverty Reduction Strategy by government every five years. Will your party introduce a multi-year Poverty Reduction Strategy with targets and timelines to lift children and families out of poverty? What specifically will your party do?

Yes. We support making investments across all sectors to reduce inequality and poverty in Ontario. In order to lift people out of poverty, we need to improve access to decent homes via inclusionary zoning and investment in affordable housing, implement a basic income, improve access to quality local food, expand our current health care system to include mental health services, and create good green jobs for the future.

You can read about our Vision for Ontario at www.gpo.ca/vision and see our fully costed platform at www.gpo.ca/platform.

2. From diapers, healthy food and extracurricular opportunities, families face significant costs to provide their children with the best start in life. Will your party introduce further increases to the Ontario Child Benefit to help families support their children's health and development? What specifically will your party do?

Yes. We support increasing the existing Ontario Child Benefit to help families who live in poverty.

3. Working full time, all year should never leave anyone in poverty. Workers caring for a sick child should never have to choose between parenting and a pay cheque. Will your party raise Ontario's minimum wage to \$15/hour on January 1st? Will you increase the number of paid sick days from two days and enforce the protection of vulnerable workers? What specifically will your party do?

Yes. Everyone deserves to have a fulfilling job that allows them to make a good living. We support raising the minimum wage to \$15, with an eventual increase to meet living wage standards. We also want to protect Ontario's workers by closing loopholes that lead to precarious work.

4. Social assistance incomes are well below the cost of living in Ontario. These low incomes force people to rely on food banks and compromise their health in substandard housing. Will your party adopt the recommendations of the Income Security Roadmap for Change report and its plan for transforming income security in Ontario - starting with a significant increase to basic OW and ODSP rates and moving to a standard flat rate structure? What specifically will your party do?

We strongly support moving forward with a basic income for all Ontarians. We believe that this is the most effective, efficient, and dignified way to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality.

In the interim, to address the inadequacy of current social programs, we support immediately increasing Ontario Disability Support Payments and Ontario Works payments to rates that match the low income measure.

5. It is increasingly difficult for low-income families to find safe, affordable housing, especially if there are family members with special needs. What specifically will your party do to get more low-income households into stable, long-term homes? Will your party support the construction of new social housing where low-income tenants pay no more than 30% of their total household income on rent? What specifically will your party do?

We believe that housing is a basic human right. Everyone deserves a dignified and decent place to live. We support the following initiatives to ensure housing for all Ontarians:

- Use a "housing first" approach to develop dedicated supportive housing for people with mental health and addictions issues, physical disabilities, or acquired brain injuries who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.
- Provide funding for municipalities to renovate deteriorating social housing stock and introduce new social housing units in their communities to address unmet local need.
- Work with the Government of Canada to increase support for proposed and existing social non-profit and co-operative housing.
- Improve Ontario's inclusionary zoning legislation to ensure the permanent creation of rental and deeply affordable units, mandating that developers include

at least 1 new unit of affordable housing for every 5 new houses or condos (20% affordability minimum for new development), including purpose-built rentals.

- Update zoning laws to allow alternatives to single-family detached homes, such as tiny homes, secondary suites, and laneway housing.

6. Many families in Ontario face childcare fees that are as high as a second mortgage payment. Will your party commit to making child care more affordable by funding child care programs instead of individuals and putting in place low fees or no fees for parents? What specifically will your party do?

We support phasing in funding for a comprehensive early childhood education and care program to offer free daycare for working parents with children under age three, support stay-at-home parents, and increase ECE supports.

We also support incentives to offset capital costs for businesses so they can set up onsite daycare with matching work hours.

7. Children in families that face discrimination in our society live in poverty in greater numbers – nearly half of children in recent immigrant families are in low income. Will your party introduce targeted strategies to support groups at higher risk of poverty, including women, single parents, racialized and Indigenous peoples, people with disabilities and members of the LGBTQ2S+ communities? What specifically will your party do?

The Green Party would implement several strategies to support groups that are at higher risk of poverty:

- Make immediate investments in affordable urban Indigenous housing while developing an Indigenous Housing Strategy that is outcomes-based and responsive to communities' needs.
- Commit to finding solutions for sharing resource revenue, including secondary and tertiary resource revenue, with First Nations.
- Immediately increase Ontario Disability Support Payment and Ontario Works payments toward rates that match the low income measure to address the inadequacy of current social programs.
- Extend health benefits (e.g.m Assistive Devices Program, Medical Transportation) to cover low income Ontarians outside of the social assistance system. We also support moving towards universal dental care and pharmacare.
- Make social assistance programs more responsive to the needs of people with mental health and addictions-related disabilities by ensuring that eligibility criteria recognizes their illness and that payments are not interrupted during times of transition (e.g. hospitalization, incarceration).

- Increase the personal income tax exemption for low income individuals.
- Implement a basic income guarantee for all Ontarians.
- Fund community developed educational programs to address achievement gaps in school boards across Ontario. Included in these programs would be the requirement for programs with an intersectional lens that address racism, sexism, homophobia, and other oppressions.
- Provide supports for racialized groups, LGBTQ+, and those with disabilities in colleges and universities.
- Embed the principles of the social determinants of health in our approach to health care: this includes income and social status, food security, social support networks, education, employment/working conditions, social environments, physical environments, personal health practices and coping skills, healthy child development, gender, and culture.
- Evaluate the Indigenous Supportive Housing Program (ISHP) and work closely with the Government of Canada and Indigenous housing providers to ensure that Indigenous people have access to adequate affordable housing.
- Increase the number of secondary women's shelters in Ontario, particularly in the north. The total number of beds in Ontario decreased from 2014 to 2016.
- Help more newcomers access the services they need by doubling funding for immigrant settlement programs and economic bridging programs.
- Support increases to Indigenous Student Bursary funding to keep pace with rising Indigenous population and enrolment, and remove citizenship and eligibility requirements that create barriers based on arbitrary geographical boundaries.

8. Research shows that child poverty is a leading cause of poor health and health inequities that can last a lifetime. Will your party expand pharmacare so that everyone has access to affordable prescription drugs? Will your party expand public dental programs so that everyone has access to oral health care? What specifically will your party do?

Yes. We support the implementation of a universal dental care program and a pharmacare program so that everyone has access to proper health care.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to us with any further questions. You can read more about our Vision for Ontario at www.gpo.ca/vision and read our platform at www.gpo.ca/platform.

Sincerely,

Samantha Bird
Director of Operations
Green Party of Ontario