

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?

In the last 20 years, Conservative and Liberal governments have allowed poverty to deepen - Ontario is one of the wealthiest provinces in one of the wealthiest countries in the world, but families and children are constantly falling farther behind. The Liberals promised in 2008 to lift 90,000 children out of poverty by 2014, but things have only gotten worse. In fact, just this year, Toronto was named the child poverty capital of Canada.

Doug Ford and the Conservatives have said very little when it comes to poverty or child poverty and continue to hide any policy they may have. The previous Conservative government slashed social assistance rates by 21%, and never increased the minimum wage from \$6.85 per hour during their mandate.

New Democrats believe it's critical that we make a change for the better, and this change begins with the most vulnerable Ontarians.

The Ontario NDP recognizes housing as a human right. Andrea Horwath will sign on to the federal National Housing Strategy, which will fund the construction of about 20,000 units, including non-profit and co-op housing. We have also committed to developing a Provincial Food and Water Strategy, to promote health through access to healthy food, put public access to drinking water first, and strengthen the resilience of Ontario's food systems. We'll work with a range of groups, from farmers and academics to gardeners and cooks, and build on work by groups like Sustain Ontario.

We are committed to working with Ontarians with lived experience, experts, frontline workers, federal and municipal governments, and community partners to develop comprehensive strategies for poverty reduction that will ensure social inequities and persistent poverty are fully addressed and alleviated.

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?

No parent or caregiver should have to choose between buying diapers or providing their children with a healthy meal. However, after 15 years of Liberal government, families have found themselves stretched thin and unable to keep up with the ever-increasing cost of living.

The Ontario NDP fully endorses the *Income Security: A Roadmap for Change* report. As per the recommendation in the report, the NDP will continue to move income support for children outside of social assistance so all low-income families can benefit fully, regardless of income source. This means shifting the remaining amounts paid in respect of children’s essential needs in social assistance to the Ontario Child Benefit as a supplement targeted to the lowest-income families.

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?

Our economy relies on the hard work of Ontarians - and that work deserves to be recognized and respected. For many Ontarians, work is low-paid, part-time and insecure, offering no benefits and little opportunity to plan for the future. Precarious, unstable employment is on the rise, and more and more people are holding down multiple jobs to make ends meet.

A higher minimum wage will put more money in their pockets to spend in their communities. The Liberals are leaving students and liquor servers behind, allowing them to be paid less than minimum wage — less than every other worker in the province. Doug Ford’s plan to stop the increase in the minimum wage will make minimum wage workers worse off – a lot worse off. These workers will lose over \$1,000 a year under a conservative government.

Andrea Horwath and the NDP will raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour for everyone and index future increases to inflation.

New Democrats believe that everyone should be able to find great opportunities in Canada's largest economy. An NDP government will do better to protect and strengthen workers' rights. We will:

- Require employers to provide at least three weeks paid vacation to every full-time employee, and we will ensure that every worker has 5 paid sick days.
- Require regular updates of workplace safety rules and WSIB rates and coverage. We will also expand coverage and definitions of occupational illnesses.
- Introduce Ontario Benefits, so that every worker will have workplace benefits for themselves, and their family. This includes people in part-time or casual jobs, as well as independent workers.
- Protect the right to join a union by making sure any workplace can unionize when 55% of workers sign a union card. We will also introduce first contract arbitration.

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?

The rules governing social assistance are complicated and often punitive. The focus of the social assistance system should be helping people overcome barriers, get out of poverty and participate in society. Social assistance should be based on a trust, working together, and solving problems.

The Ontario NDP fully endorses the Income Security: A Roadmap for Change report, and its findings. As such, an NDP government commits to the report's recommendations, including, but not limited to:

- Establishing a new, flat rate structure that is simple and fair applicable to both OW and ODSP.
- Increasing the Ontario Works rate by 10%, 7% and 5% annually and
- increasing the Ontario Disability Support Program rate by 5% annually until 2021. Future increases will be based on income adequacy and set by an independent panel.
- Ensuring all adults have access to a consistent level of support, regardless of living situation
- Ensuring single adults and couples receive a standard flat rate that does not distinguish between basic needs and shelter.

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?

Housing is a human right. However, for families throughout much of Ontario owning a home they can afford remains a dream, while renting is painfully expensive. While Conservatives and Liberals sat idle, housing costs spiraled out of control, speculators made fortunes, and too many families had to put their hopes on hold.

We will keep the affordable housing we already have. Andrea Horwath and the NDP have committed to funding the province's one-third share of repairing social housing across Ontario, with the municipal and federal governments contributing their one-third shares as well.

We will build new affordable homes — 65,000 of them over the next decade. Andrea Horwath will sign on to the federal National Housing Strategy, which will fund the construction of about 20,000 units, including non-profit and co-op housing. Our 10-year capital plan will make additional investments to build the remaining 45,000 units. We will also provide the co-op housing sector with \$3 million to seed co-op bid development.

We will maintain rent-geared-to-income and rent supplements. Andrea Horwath and the NDP will overhaul the government's inclusionary zoning regulations, so they actually accomplish what they set out to do: require a certain number of affordable homes in new housing developments. That will include increasing the percentage of affordable homes required and bringing rental properties under the regulations.

We will make rentals more affordable by introducing legislation to provide:

- Effective, reasonable, predictable rent controls that limit the use of above-guideline increases to "renovict" people from their homes
- A rent registry, so tenants can know how much a landlord has charged in the past
- Protection for renters who pay their rent and abide by their agreements
- Updated rules that recognize changing rental markets
- Guarantees that rents will remain affordable in the long term, while spurring investments in new, purpose-built rental buildings

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?

After 15 years of Liberal government promises, Ontario is Canada's most expensive province for child care, with Toronto parents paying the highest fees. Not to mention that with vows to slash billions from the provincial budget, the Conservatives will only make things worse.

Andrea Horwath and the NDP will make sure every family can access affordable, high quality, not-for-profit child care. Andrea Horwath and the NDP will phase in an affordable, province-wide child care plan, starting with care for infants and toddlers in the second year of our mandate, and preschoolers in the third year. We will base our plan and costs on the Ontario Coalition for Better Childcare's recommendations. If your household income is under \$40,000, you won't have to pay for public, licensed, notfor-profit child care. And if your household earns more, your fees will be based on ability to pay — with the average cost coming to \$12 per day. We will not reduce existing subsidies.

We will expand the number of not-for-profit, licensed, affordable child care spaces in Ontario by 202,000 spaces — a 51% increase, adding more than 10% every year.

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?

We owe it to each other and to ourselves to end poverty, especially child poverty. We want a province where every Ontarian can live with dignity and optimism.

Over the last 20 years, governments have allowed poverty to deepen. Too often, they've ignored the root causes and failed to take basic steps to address poverty. Conservative and Liberal governments froze or cut social assistance programs, child care, affordable housing, and the services that help people get out of poverty and get into the middle class.

Evidence shows that ableism, systemic racism, homophobia and transphobia can impact our health and wellbeing. An NDP government, for example, will ensure that everyone who lives in Ontario can visit an emergency room for health care needs — without having to pay for it. We will ensure every resident has emergency room access and care regardless of their immigration or insurance status. We will work with advocates to look at additional steps to improve access to care, no matter who you are.

We will also properly fund women’s shelters and transitional housing and ensure there are services and programs available to help women recover from partner violence and abuse. And we will set aside a portion of the 65,000 units of affordable housing we are building for women and their families escaping violence.

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?

Every three minutes, someone visits an Ontario doctor’s office or emergency room to get emergency care for a dental problem. 2.2 million Ontarians have no drug coverage, and a quarter of Ontarians have not been taking the medicine their prescribed because of cost.

With our Ontario Benefits dental care plan, every worker will have workplace benefits for themselves and their family. That includes people in part-time or casual jobs, in a plan that follows you, job to job. We’ll begin by setting a minimum standard of dental coverage, ensuring people have access to essential care. We’ll also require every employer to provide dental benefits to workers and their families that meet a minimum standard of coverage.

Andrea Horwath and the NDP will also extend public dental coverage to every senior without retiree benefits and to every person on social assistance, ensuring that over 2 million more Ontarians are eligible for public dental coverage.

We will expand public dental services at those locations with capital investments of at least \$25 million to build new dental suites and operate mobile dental buses, especially in rural, remote and Northern communities.



Andrea Horwath and the NDP will make Ontario the first province with universal pharmacare by 2020 — so every Ontarian can get the medication they need. It will mean lower costs, less worrying and better health for everyone -- regardless of their age, income, or health status. And unlike the Liberal government's plan, nobody will be excluded. New Democrats believe that pharmacare is health care – and no one should have to pull out their wallet to get the treatment they need.