

## **Provincial NDP Questionnaire Answers**

### *Public Services*

#### **1 - If your party is elected, what will you do to ensure that municipal ambulance services can meet the provincial standard of a 10.04-minute response time for urban centres?**

*A lack of resources for Ontario's ambulances puts patients at risk. And it often results in paramedics denying themselves adequate breaks for food and rest - as they try to meet response times and deal with offload delays once they reach the hospital.*

*The McGuinty Liberals promised better funding for our public services but haven't delivered. The 2005 Auditor's report showed that the municipal-provincial split on responsibility and funding for land ambulance services "can result in varying levels of service across the province for people with similar needs living in similar areas." The Auditor noted municipalities have varied tax bases for funding ambulances, and that some municipalities are increasingly unwilling to let their ambulances cross municipal boundaries. This has affected the integration of a number of specialized health initiatives, including the Ontario Stroke Strategy. The NDP would focus on addressing the Auditor's recommendations, giving paramedics the support they need to do their jobs, and uploading the downloaded services.*

#### **2 - What will you do to ensure that Children's Aid workers have more, not less, time to spend with the at-risk families they work with?**

*The McGuinty government has a disastrous record when it comes to children at risk. First families of children with special needs were forced to give up custody of their children in order to access the specialized services they need. Then the Auditor General showed more accountability was needed for Children's Aid Societies – from how money was spent to how well workers were able, with the resources they had, to respond to the needs of children in care. Then grandparents, who were promised financial assistance if they took custody of their at-risk grandchildren, saw that funding disappear. Most recently, the Provincial Child Advocate spoke out and said children in care need more time with their social workers, more attention paid to their health, safety and well-being, and more support as they age out of care.*

*The NDP is committed to putting children first. That means putting a high priority on direct contact with their CAS workers. The Ministry of Children & Youth Services must give workers the tools they need – from effective software to streamlined requirements – to keep proper records and put children first, without being overwhelmed by paperwork.*

#### **3 - What is your strategy for ensuring that children who need treatment get it in a timely manner so that they are not permanently harmed?**

*Dalton McGuinty's actions have not matched his rhetoric when it comes to children's mental health. Recent funding – a 5% base funding increase – is hardly enough to make up for years of underfunding under both Harris and McGuinty. It doesn't make up for the dozen years of flatlined budgets and ever-growing waiting lists, which currently sit at six months for treating a child with a mental health issue. And the new framework for Children's Mental Health is still just a shell. A proactive, preventive approach is needed. Currently those with the most severe problems are seen first, leaving many children who would benefit greatly from early intervention waiting until their problems escalate before they can get the help they need. It's time to help our children thrive by ensuring accessible, timely and comprehensive care to mental health services.*

**4 - If your party is elected, where will Ontario stand in terms of per-student funding for community colleges at the end of your term? What will you do to ensure that college management is held accountable so that the public dollars colleges receive are used to improve education quality?**

*Ontario is not only below the national average on per student funding in colleges we're above the national average in post-secondary education costs. New Democrats believe Ontario colleges should reach at least the national average in per student funding - but there has to be accountability for those funds. In OPSEU's submission to the Postsecondary Review it was noted that executive appointments often took place without an evaluation process, Presidential salary increases were sometimes 3 times that of the other employee groups and there was very little accountability for these decisions. New Democrats have advocated for measures that increase transparency and accountability at the post-secondary level such as Freedom of Information access and are interested in measures that would improve college governance.*

**5 - If your party is elected, will you halt the uploading of Ontario corporate tax collection and auditing and keep this work inside the Ontario Ministry of Finance? If not, what steps will you take to ensure that Ontario's interests are protected under the new arrangement?**

*Ontario's NDP opposes the uploading of Ontario corporate tax collection and auditing and keep this work inside the Ministry of Finance. This is a bad move that will cost the public money. It does nothing to protect the corporate tax revenues that Ontario depends on to help fund vital public services. Instead, it grants full control of our corporate tax revenues to another level of government. Ontario's NDP will ensure Ontario's tax independence.*

**6 - What is your party's plan to bring the wages of workers in developmental services up to parity with their colleagues in equivalent positions in the public sector?**

*The Ontario government must invest adequate funds to support for people with developmental disabilities. Instead, the McGuinty government is shutting down regional centres and using scabs to cross picket lines of striking Community Living*

workers. This is wrong. The government should respect the collective bargaining process and ensure that supports developmentally disabled adults need are there for them - this includes addressing the disparity in wages which is creating labour shortages in the sector.

**7 - Does your party support privatizing OCWA, or would you maintain it as a public agency to offer a cost-effective alternative for smaller municipalities, provide emergency services, and work in partnership with the Ministry of the Environment?**

*The history of privatization in Ontario illustrates that Ontario families most often pay more either through taxes or fees and receive less by way of service. We would oppose any attempts to privatize OCWA.*

**8 - Will your party restore funding to the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ministry of the Environment so that real per-capita funding for each ministry reaches its 1992-93 levels? If so, by when?**

*Dalton McGuinty is letting down working families by under-staffing and under-resourcing the Ministry of Natural Resources and Ministry of Environment. We don't have enough people on the job. They don't have the tools they need to fulfill their responsibilities. The Environmental Commissioner raised the matter in his 2006 annual report titled "Neglecting our Obligations." Ontario's NDP has raised the matter repeatedly. On each occasion, the McGuinty government has acknowledged the need to do more - then done nothing. New Democrats support restoring funding to the MNR and MOE to historic levels. We also agree with the Environment Commissioner's recommendation: Ontario must undertake a step-wise, strategic rebuilding of capacity at MNR, to ensure that the ministries can fulfill their mandates.*

**9 - What is your strategy to support the environmental protection activities of our municipalities?**

*Financial and information support for municipal initiatives to protect the environment is essential. There are many municipal leaders across the province who have implemented many sustainability programs to help reduce costs and reduce emissions and waste. Sharing information resources to improve practices across the province will encourage municipalities who are still in the process of setting environmental goals and objectives and help municipalities well on the road to protecting the environment sustain those efforts.*

**10 - Will your party triple the provincial contribution to our provincial parks, from \$15.3 million to \$46 million, to ensure that all revenue generated by parks is invested in park operations?**

*Ontario's parks have been underfunded for too long. Charging new and additional fees is not a viable solution and is unfair to working families. New Democrats agree*

*that parks should receive at least as much money as they generate for the Ontario government.*

**11 - Will your party scrap the competitive bidding model for community health care? If not, would you bring in successor rights for unionized home care workers so that they automatically follow their jobs, with their union and their collective agreement, when their work is transferred to a new employer?**

*The NDP will extend successor rights to home care workers. We are also committed to ending the cutthroat practice of privatization through competitive bidding in home care, which has destabilized the sector, driven down wages, impaired working conditions and interfered with continuity of care for home care recipients.*

**12 - What is your position on using taxpayer dollars to pay private for-profit companies to deliver hospital services such as diagnostic and lab services, or so-called "ancillary" services like food, cleaning, and laundry services? What is your position on using taxpayer dollars to fund private profits through so-called private public partnerships in the hospital sector?**

*Privately-funded hospitals and health care services undermine public medicare in Ontario. What's more, they waste precious health care dollars on private profits for corporations. In North Bay, for example, hospital laundry services are being contracted out to Sudbury while the new, privately funded hospital already faces massive cost overruns. These privatization efforts enabled and encouraged by the McGuinty government, waste precious health care dollars and destabilize jobs in our communities. The NDP believes that if you have \$10 for health care, \$10 should go to health care. No portion should be wasted on private profits.*

*The NDP wants to see so-called "AFP" (Alternative Financing and Procurement) hospital projects returned to the public sector. All future hospital and health care projects must be 100% public Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) must put public medicare first - and should not have the power to privatize or contract out health and ancillary services.*

**13 - What is your strategy to end staffing shortages of hospital professionals?**

*The McGuinty government has failed to keep its promise to hire 8,000 new nurses. Millions of Ontarians still don't have access to a family doctor. Under these conditions, other health and hospital professionals have fallen through the cracks of government attention – even though these front-line workers provide valuable care to millions of Ontarians. The NDP Health Human Resources strategy will recognize the importance of these professionals – from diagnostic technicians to physiotherapists – and continue to advocate for better team-based care in the hospital and in the community.*

**14 - What is your plan to strengthen the Ontario Human Rights Commission to ensure that the backlog of human rights complaints is addressed and all people who are victims of human rights violations receive speedy justice? What is your plan to assess and remove barriers to justice created by requiring all complaints to be litigated?**

*The "direct access" model enacted under Bill 107 will undermine human rights in Ontario. The Ontario Human Rights Commission should be immediately restored to its original mandate and given the tools to ensure that human rights complaints can be properly, promptly and thoroughly investigated and remedied. To do this the OHRC must be made truly independent and report directly to the Legislature - not the Attorney General. Furthermore, the government should invest resources to ensure that mediations should be completed within three months, complex investigations should be completed within one year, and Tribunal decisions should be rendered within two years of the filing of the complaint.*

**15 - If your party is elected, will you implement a new deposit-return system that will see liquor containers returned to the LCBO? Will you instruct the LCBO to use its market power to work with wineries and distilleries to increase the re-use of liquor containers, particularly bottles?**

Yes.

**16 - What is your position on the privatization of the LCBO?**

*Ontario's NDP believes the LCBO provides an excellent service for the people of Ontario and revenue our province desperately needs. We would oppose any effort to privatize the LCBO in whole or in part.*

**17 - What is your party's position on agency stores? If elected, will you bring in stricter limits on the agency stores program and replace agency stores with real LCBO outlets where this would increase provincial revenue?**

*New Democrats haven't seen any evidence of a need for any new agency stores south of the French River. Agency stores were supposed to provide LCBO service for people in remote communities that couldn't justify an LCBO outlet. Unfortunately, the Harris Tories and now the McGuinty Liberals are using it to privatize through the backdoor.*

**18 - Given that the LHINs are intended to reflect the health needs of communities, do you favour electing the Boards of Directors of LHINs at the community level, in the same way we elect school board trustees? Given that the LHINs have a mandate to integrate health services, would you be willing to negotiate with health care unions and fund a province-wide human resources adjustment plan to ensure that health care workers are not forced to shoulder the cost of restructuring?**

*The Liberals' "Local Health Integration Networks" are anything but local. And they currently have the power to close, consolidate and contract out – actions that could have dramatic effects on Ontario's community health services. The NDP believes in restoring local democracy in health care and making sure communities have control over their own health care resources – to keep necessary services in the communities where they are needed.*

*The NDP recognizes the centrality of health care workers in the delivery of health care across the province. Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) must put public medicare first by ensuring LHINs do not have the power to privatize or contract out health and ancillary services at the expense of workers.*

***19 - Will you support and fund a legislated, province-wide staffing standard that ensures a minimum of 3.5 hours of nursing and personal care per resident per day in long-term care facilities?***

*The NDP has been fighting alongside health care workers for a minimum standard of care that would allow Ontario seniors to live with health and dignity. The McGuinty Liberals promised a "revolution" in long term care but came far short, ignoring our calls for a legislated minimum standard of care. The NDP reaffirms our commitment to establishing a minimum standard of 3.5 hours of hands-on nursing and personal care per resident, per day.*

***20 - If your party is elected, will you guarantee that provincial meat inspectors will remain as OMAFRA employees and that their work will not be transferred to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency?***

Yes

***21 - What is your plan to ensure that mental health services in the community are properly funded and accessible to all?***

*Lack of community services and affordable housing, vanishing hospital resources and inpatient programs, and the failure of the Mental Health Act to protect the chronically ill, are major obstacles to mental health care in Ontario. But the McGuinty government refuses to make mental health a priority.*

*In London, the McGuinty government has given a 'thumbs up' to the lay off of 29 RPNs at St. Joseph Regional Mental Health Care. In Thunder Bay, hospital programs are slated to close in 2011 with no clear plan on how community-based programs will bridge the transition. In Kingston, jails are being used to house those who need professional psychiatric care.*

*Without community investments like affordable housing and treatment programs we can't begin to say we are on the road to serving the needs of the mentally ill. The NDP is committed to return ensuring stable core funding model for mental health services in the community.*

**22 - If your party forms the next government, when will Ontario Disability Support payments be brought up to poverty-line levels? Will you reform the system so that intermittently-disabled and partially-employed people are not penalized?**

*The Ontario NDP is well aware that under the McGuinty government the gap between wealthy Ontarians and everyday families is growing every day. Thousands of Ontario families are faced every day with the unacceptable choices that go with incomes that fall far short of the minimum required for a decent life. Under Dalton McGuinty social assistance rates are lower in real terms than they were under the Harris Conservatives. This year's rate increase applies after the provincial election and amounts to 2% or close to inflation. The McGuinty government continues to ignore the devastating impact on the poorest Ontarians of the Harris Government's 22% cut and eight year freeze in Ontario Works benefits and its eight year freeze of Ontario Disability Support Plan benefits. Ontario's NDP would allow an independent panel to establish rates to ensure that people living on ODSP have the funds they need.*

**23 - What is your vision for the public service? If your party is elected, what will the OPS look like in four years?**

*Under Dalton McGuinty Ontario has been moving more and more to a "virtual government" that sets policy but provides little direct service. Ontario's NDP says it's time to stop dismantling the public service – whether it's contracting out, eliminating positions or simply refusing to invest in the staff required to provide the public services Ontario families want. Ontario's NDP believes keeping work inside the OPS ensures direct ministerial accountability.*

**24 - What is your position on the relocation of public service jobs in Toronto to other communities?**

*Ontario's NDP is far more concerned about the overall loss of public sector jobs in some hard-hit economic regions across the province. North Bay, for example, lost 26 jobs recently when hospital laundry services were contracted out. This is the real threat to regional economies and both the PCs and Liberals are ignoring it.*

**25 - What is your party's position on the use of Area Term Contracts for the maintenance and reconstruction of provincial highways?**

*Area-term contracts are another form of privatization. The history of privatization in Ontario illustrates that Ontario families most often pay more either through taxes or fees and receive less by way of service. The history of the 407 illustrates this. Ontario doesn't need to make that mistake again.*

**26 - What is your plan for public school funding to ensure that all of our children can contribute equally to the future of this province? Will you change the current funding formula?**

*When the provincial government took away school board's power to levy taxes they promised a new funding formula that would ensure fair and equitable funding. They were half right: now all boards are funded equally inadequately. New Democrats supported the move away from local taxation to a central funding formula because we believe that students shouldn't receive inadequate education because of where they live - but the key thing has been ensuring the funding formula is fair.*

*In 2002, in response to public demands from parents, teachers, education workers and trustees the government asked Mordechai Rozanski to analyze the funding formula. He reported back with recommendations that were embraced by all parties - but five years later they still haven't been acted upon. Last December the parents group People for Education identified 11 recommendations of by Rozanski that haven't been ignored by this government including: updating all benchmarks in the formula (for example, the formula still doesn't cover the real cost of paying teacher salaries), set the Local Priorities Grant as five per cent of the overall grant (instead the Liberals scrapped it entirely) and enhancing the declining enrolment grant (it's been cut just as school boards across Ontario are losing students)*

*Most importantly, Rozanski called for an annual accountable review of education funding which the Liberals eagerly embraced in 2003 - promising a Standing all-party Committee that would travel the province holding hearings on the funding formula. They have refused to keep this promise. The McGuinty Government has invested in some areas but they haven't addressed the core problems identified by Rozanski - instead focusing on their election strategy of producing statistics about smaller classes and higher test scores.*

*The failure to fix the funding formula leaves boards struggling year after year. Programs are cut and qualified staff are dismissed. While the government intervened to ensure teachers got fair collective agreements they have done little to protect educational support staff - and despite the important role they play in schools they're being cut.*

*The first step of an NDP plan would be to ensure that all of the Rozanski recommendations are implemented to establish a baseline of fair funding. The government would then be held accountable by an open annual public review of the funding formula by a Standing Committee on Education.*

*From there we would begin to look at building a truly equitable education system - early years programs, including junior kindergarten is an area that needs to grow but that funding needs to be added on top of a funding formula that works.*

***27 - Will you revise the legislation to put the public health labs under the direction of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, as recommended by Justice Archie Campbell? If your party is elected, will you revise the legislation to keep the new agency within the OPS? If not, what steps will your government take to ensure that the jobs, working conditions and pensions of public health labs staff are protected, and the services they provide are maintained and adequately funded?***

*The NDP supports the creation of a new public health agency under the direction of the Chief Medical Officer of Health and within the OPS. This would allow the government to ensure the necessary independence and expertise of the new*

*agency's board and senior management while preserving direct accountability to the minister and the public for its operations.*

*If the new agency is already established outside of the Ontario public service, the NDP is committed to ensuring that successor rights will apply to all OPSEU members, that participation in the OPSEU pension plan will be grandparented, that no OPSEU member will be laid off, and that no services will be privatized, downloaded or contracted out.*

**28 - If your party is elected, will you change the law to ban the use of scabs during work stoppages?**

Yes. When scabs were banned in Ontario 97 per cent of collective agreements were resolved without a strike or lockout. When scabs were made legal strikes got longer, more frequent and picket line violence increased.

**29 - If your party is elected, will you amend the OLRA to permit card check certification for all workers covered by Ontario law, not just those in the construction industry?**

*Yes. Card check certification was the law under Conservative, Liberal and NDP governments. Dalton McGuinty's refusal to restore it to all workers violates basic principles of democracy.*

**30 - Will your party undo the Mike Harris government's change to CECBA and make it legal once again for arbitrators to rule on Crown employee classification issues?**

Yes.

**31. Will your party change essential and emergency services legislation to make it fairer for public service employees? If so, how?**

*The NDP would rebalance the essential and emergency services legislation in the OPS to ensure that they returned to the original meaning of the words. Emergency and essential services should be used in life threatening situations not the convenience of the government. If the public is at risk, the service must be maintained but it should be up to the government to prove that the service is threatening the health and safety of the public. We also believe that OPSEU and the government has developed a mature bargaining relationship in the right to strike environment. There is no reason therefore to drag essential service negotiations on for almost a year to come to a determination.*

**32 - If your party is elected, on what date will Ontario's minimum wage reach \$10 an hour? Why?**

*Ontario's NDP believes that the minimum wage should reach \$10 an hour immediately and continue to rise at a level to ensure that a person earning it and*

*working full-time lives above the poverty line. No one working full-time should have to raise a family in poverty.*

**33- If elected, will your party implement Justice Campbell's recommendation to amend health and safety laws and regulations to include the precautionary principle?**

Ontario's NDP is committed to implementing all of Justice Campbell's recommendations.

**34 - Will you strengthen the Employment Standards Act to ensure that temp agencies and the employers who use them are held accountable for ensuring fair working conditions? More generally, what is your strategy to help people in low-end jobs, at the bottom end of our wealthy economy, share in the prosperity of this province?**

*In answer to the first question: Yes. Employers should not be able to sub-contract their responsibilities to their employees. More generally, it's time to stand up for working families who too often find themselves in unreliable underpaid jobs. The Ontario government could start by immediately raising the minimum wage to ten dollars an hour so everyone working full-time has at a minimum a decent wage. Unions have a proud record in our province of improving working standards and quality of life. Workers need protections to ensure the right to organize - particularly in low-end jobs. The government could start by restoring card-based certification so workers could organize free from intimidation. Employment standards laws need a general overhaul to crackdown on exploitation by temp agencies and to guarantee all workers are covered and covered equally. A Wage Earner Protection Fund should be established to ensure workers are paid when companies go bankrupt. And a zero-tolerance approach to violations of the Employment Standards Act should be adopted. Employers who violate the Act must be caught. Workers owed reparations must receive them in a timely fashion.*

**35 - Does your party support union rights for part-time workers at our community colleges? If so, and if your party is elected, when will you change the law?**

*Yes. New Democrats have already put forward legislation ensuring part-time college workers the right to organize. Unfortunately, it died on the order paper when Dalton McGuinty shut down the House early this spring to start his summer break. New Democrats will continue to press for this Legislation.*

**36 - As the indirect employer of hundreds of thousands of public employees, what is your plan to ensure that all Ontario public sector employees will be able to retire at a reasonable age with a reasonable pension?**

Ontario's NDP believes that after a lifetime of hard work providing for their families, no one should not be struggling financially when they retire. The NDP

believes many more Ontarians need to be covered by defined benefit pension plans and that all plan members should be able to sleep soundly at night knowing that their pension is going to be there when they need it. Public pensions are irreplaceable. They provide universality of coverage, full indexing and low administration costs that no private system can even approximate. Despite this, public pensions in Canada and around the world have been under constant attack by conservative interests for several decades. Howard Hampton and the Ontario NDP have put forward proposals for pension reform including: mandatory, partial, permanent inflation protection for defined benefit pension plans in Ontario; significant and meaningful plan member (employee) representation on all pension plans' governing bodies; fair and equitable distribution of pension surpluses, the NDP would enshrine Regulation 909, the so-called "surplus sharing regulation", in the body of the Pension Benefits Act with a few minor clarifications to take into account the 2000 Ontario Court surplus sharing decision.

**37 - If elected, will your party introduce safety engineered medical sharps legislation as soon as possible?**

*The NDP has been working side by side with OPSEU and its labour partners in promoting this common-sense approach to safety for health care workers. We are committed to enacting health critic Shelley Martel's "Safe Needles Save Lives Act" immediately and without delay.*

**38 - What is your plan to respond to Justice Campbell's recommendations so that we can successfully contain the next contagious disease pandemic and keep health care workers safe?**

*The McGuinty government has failed to learn from SARS. During SARS, front-line workers and unions were ignored – and they're still being ignored. The Ministry of Labour was all but forgotten during SARS – but when legionnaire's disease broke out in 2005 under the McGuinty government, it was sidelined again. There's still no government policy on the safe use of N-95 safety masks. There is still no culture of safety in health care workplaces, and Ontario workers deserve better. The NDP has been campaigning for safer health care workers, putting forward suggestions like the safe needles bill, but this is clearly not a priority for the McGuinty government.*

*For example, we have called for properly fitting N-95 safety masks as per Justice Campbell's recommendation. We are actively campaigning with Shelley Martel's private member's bill for the safer needles that can save the lives of health care workers and patients. These are simple recommendations that the government still refuses to implement. The NDP continues to fight for a safer workplace culture in health care across Ontario.*

**39 - Will your party introduce legislation to enhance and enforce protections against violence in the workplace?**

*The NDP has always been a strong advocate of workplace safety and security. We stand with workers who assert that violence, harassment and bullying in the*

*workplace are always unacceptable. The NDP has put forward an anti-harassment bill that would amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act to require employers to protect workers from harassment in the workplace, give workers the right to refuse to work in certain circumstances after harassment has occurred, require an investigation of allegations of workplace-related harassment and require employers to take steps to prevent further occurrences of workplace-related harassment.*

***40 - What is your fiscal plan for Ontario for the next four years? If your party is elected, will you raise taxes? If so, which ones, and by how much? Will you cut taxes? If so, which ones, and by how much? If you do cut taxes, what public services will you cut to make up for the revenue shortfall? If your party is elected, what revenue measures other than taxes will you implement?***

New Democrats will unveil our balanced-budget fiscal plan during the campaign. We will look at fair ways to gather the funds the province needs to provide public services.

Shortly after the Liberals won election in 2003 they declared that Ontario had a “surprise” deficit of \$5.6 billion. McGuinty had no right to act surprised. He had spent most of the previous election campaign attacking the Eves Conservatives for running a deficit. Gerry Philips, the Liberals’ Opposition Finance Critic, and Monte Kwinter, now in Cabinet, stated that the deficit was at \$5 billion – yet the Liberals financial plan assumed a balanced budget. McGuinty was able to use this “surprise” as an excuse to abandon election promises and implement the health tax. The Health Tax is one of the most regressive taxes ever introduced in Ontario and an unfair way to restore Ontario’s fiscal balance. When it was introduced a single-mother earning \$30,000 faced a 24 per cent tax hike, while someone making over \$200,000 got a tax increase of only three per cent.

***41- Does your party support Ontario’s participation in TILMA or similar interprovincial agreements?***

TILMA is a formidable instrument for de-regulation that will undermine the rights of working people. Labour standards and related measures are explicitly included as general exceptions to TILMA. This would allow companies to challenge labour standards like health and safety regulations and employment standards. Ontario’s NDP oppose any involvement in TILMA or any similar agreement.

***42 – Does your party support or oppose the adoption of the Citizens’ Assembly’s MMP model?***

*New Democrats have long supported mixed-member proportional representation. Unfortunately, Dalton McGuinty has set the threshold for success in the referendum at 60 per cent support and a majority in at least 60 per cent of ridings – clearly setting it up to fail.*