

1. Poverty Reduction Strategy

Q: Will your party commit to creating Ontario's next five-year Poverty Reduction Strategy? What will your Poverty Reduction Strategy contain?

The GPO understands that the burden of poverty is unacceptably high in our province. Accordingly, the Green Party of Ontario would take concrete action to reduce poverty. First, we would raise the minimum wage to \$12/hour, and then we would index it to inflation. This would immediately put more money in Ontarians' pockets.

We would also double the Ontario Child Benefit for families who live close to the poverty line. This would improve the lives of around half a million children. Next, we would push the Ontario government to establish a Guaranteed Annual Income for all Ontarians. We see this as a critical step toward empowering Ontario's youth, adults, and seniors. A GAI would ensure that every person of working age in Ontario who files an income tax return would have an income that at least meets the poverty level. It would reduce administrative costs and government bureaucracy. It would lead to a more efficient, effective and dignified system of social assistance.

2. Extended Medical Benefits for All Low-Income Ontarians

Q: Will your party create a new extended medical benefits program for all low-income people in Ontario that includes drug, dental, and vision care?

We understand the need for medical services and support beyond what is currently provided in Ontario. That's why the Green Party of Ontario wants to include dental care in OHIP coverage. We want to extend that service to Ontario citizens because we know they need it.

For the GPO, investments in health promotion and illness prevention are a top priority. We recognize that the current system of support programs are often over-subscribed and under funded. They usually require onerous application and qualification procedures, and sometimes continued monitoring and scrutiny. This all leads to bloated bureaucracies to administer programs and police applicants. This system lacks dignity and it hasn't worked.

Where support is needed for high drug costs, the cancellation of the current energy consumption subsidy would allow us to transfer funds through a rebate program to lower-income families and seniors who save energy.

3. WSIB and the Ontario Disability Support Program

Q: Will your party ask the WSIB to withdraw the proposed policy changes to ensure the WSIB system provides adequate and ongoing support to people who have been injured at work? And how will you improve ODSP benefits to ensure people with disabilities don't have to live in poverty?

The Green Party of Ontario is committed to a sustainable insurance system that provides injured workers with the compensation they require, while limiting the financial barriers to new job creation. We will work with WSIB to provide better, more efficient customer service so that premiums do not grow at unsustainable rates.

The Green Party of Ontario (GPO) will commit to completing the review of the province's social assistance programs. We are determined to improving the ways we assist Ontarians who need the help in gaining meaningful and sustainable employment, securing their income, while remaining accountable, transparent, and fiscally responsible.

We believe that Ontario needs a new approach to social assistance that is fair, less bureaucratic and removes barriers to work. We acknowledge that the programs as they are now aren't working and are in need of significant reform.

We support full funding for the recommendations from the Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario, unlike the three parties at Queen's Park.

We are determined to push for improved ways of assisting Ontarians by:

- exploring the best options to move to a guaranteed annual income,*
- removing barriers to meaningful employment,*
- ending the claw-back penalties on benefits and for the working low-income earner that slow or prevent reintegration into the workforce, and*
- reducing bureaucracy by moving to a simpler, more integrated system focused on the needs of recipients.*

We will continue to push for action and continue to be committed to working for a stronger social assistance structure in Ontario.



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4. Employment Insurance

Q: What will your party do to convince the federal government to restore benefit eligibility to all Ontario workers and ensure the Employment Insurance system does its role in maintaining the income security of Ontario families?

We witnessed the federal government's assault on EI, and we have seen the damage it has done to Ontario workers and families. The Green Party of Ontario would commit to working with the federal government to make sure that Ontario's workers get a fair deal out of EI. Since the workers paid into the program, they have every right to benefit from it. We want to make sure that they do just that.

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