

Ontario Election 2014: Where Do the Parties Stand on Income Security?

Question We Asked	Green Party	Liberal Party	NDP	Progressive Conservative Party
<p><i>Will your party commit to creating Ontario's next five-year Poverty Reduction Strategy?</i></p> <p><i>What will your Poverty Reduction Strategy contain?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise the minimum wage to \$12 / hour, then index to inflation. • Double the Ontario Child Benefit for families who live close to the poverty line. • Create a Guaranteed Annual Income to 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will release the new Poverty Reduction Strategy, along with targets and indicators, within 60 days of returning to the Legislative Assembly. • Index the OCB maximum annual benefit and the income eligibility threshold to the Ontario Consumer Price Index. • Health benefits for children in low income families (see below). • Enhance the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative by \$42 million. • Create a Local Poverty Reduction Fund. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a poverty reduction strategy and prioritize the elimination of poverty in Ontario. • Maintain poverty reduction commitments in the province's existing fiscal framework. • In addition, invest in more personal support workers and introduce a fully-refundable Caregiver Tax Credit of \$1,275 per year. • Index the OCB to inflation. • Increase funding for school nutrition programs from \$20 million to \$35 million per year. • Expand dental benefits for an additional 100,000 low-income children. • Hire 1,000 new educational assistants. • Ensure parents can access affordable child care. • Provide \$100 million in emergency relief funding to stabilize the child care sector and keep centres open. <p style="text-align: right;">...continued on page 2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No response – referral to party platform, which is silent on this issue.

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<p>...continuation of question on page 1</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide ongoing annual mitigation funding of approx \$20 million per year to ensure centres stay open in 18 communities. • Index the overall child care budget to inflation, which is an additional \$20 million per year. • Increase the minimum wage to \$12 / hour by 2016 and index to inflation. • Implement a 1% increase to OW and ODSP. 	
<p><i>Will your party create a new extended medical benefits program for all low-income people in Ontario that includes drug, dental, and vision care?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include dental care in OHIP coverage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend additional health benefits to children from low-income families – to give services that fall outside of OHIP: prescription drugs, vision care, mental health services, and assistive devices. • Develop options for a health benefit program for all low-income Ontarians. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stand up for Ontario in talks with the federal government and work with other provinces to push for a new federal accord that improves health care transfers and includes a national pharmacare plan. • If national plan fails, committed to exploring options for Ontario to move forward independently. • Expand dental coverage to another 100,000 low-income children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No response – referral to party platform, which is silent on this issue.

Question We Asked	Green Party	Liberal Party	NDP	Progressive Conservative Party
<p><i>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?</i></p> <p><i>And how will you improve ODSP benefits to ensure people with disabilities don't have to live in poverty?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with WSIB to provide better, more efficient customer service so that premiums do not grow at unsustainable rates. • Complete the review of the province's social assistance programs. • Improve 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. • Fully fund the recommendations from the Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario. • Explore the best options to move to a Guaranteed Annual Income. • Remove barriers to meaningful employment. • End the clawback penalties on benefits that slow or prevent reintegration into the workforce. • Reduce bureaucracy by moving to a simpler, more integrated system focused on the needs of recipients. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WSIB recently released a draft policy on this - expect that our feedback will be reflected in the WSIB's revised policy. • Committed to ensuring that the process will result in a solution that is fair for workers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly opposed to these policy changes. • New policy regime will be used to deny or cut benefits, which is inappropriate. • Better solutions to WSIB's unfunded liability can be found in Harry Arthurs' report, <i>Funding Fairness</i>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No response – referral to party platform, which is silent on this issue.

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<p><i>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?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the federal government to make sure that Ontario's workers get a fair deal out of EI. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to fight for the needs of Ontarians, including improvements to the EI program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly raise these concerns with the federal government in an effort to restore access. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No response – referral to party platform, which is silent on this issue.