

PROVINCIAL ELECTION 2022: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FROM THE PARTIES

The Income Security Advocacy Centre (ISAC) developed the following 10 questions on important issues that affect people living on low incomes in Ontario. On May 12, these 10 questions were sent to each of the four major political parties with sitting members in Provincial parliament. You can read the original questionnaire [here](#), which includes some preamble and context with each question.

As of May 27, 2022, three of the four parties have responded. In the chart below, their responses are copied exactly as received, however party logos and colours were removed.

We hope this information will be helpful and informative to clients of the legal clinic system and the Ontario public at large.

What is your party's plan to end poverty in Ontario?

Progressive Conservative Party	No answer received as of May 27
New Democratic Party of Ontario	<p>New Democrats are deeply committed to ending poverty in Ontario. We have committed to a number of measures that, together, will end poverty in our province. You can read our full platform here, but here are some of the highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$20 minimum wage by the end of our first term • 10 paid sick days for all workers • Fair treatment for gig, temp, and contract workers • Doubling ODSP and OW rates by 2023 • Universal mental health, dental, and pharmacare • Bring back real rent control and scrap vacancy decontrol • Introduce a portable housing benefit to save 311,000 households an average of \$300/ month on rent by providing direct financial support. • Establish a new public housing agency, Housing Ontario, to finance and build 250,000 affordable and non-market homes. • End chronic homelessness within 10 years, with a Housing First Strategy and by building 60,000 supportive housing units for people living with mental health and addiction challenges • Lower auto insurance rates by 40% on average • Fix the WSIB and end deeming • Reverse Doug Ford's cuts to Legal Aid and start fixing the inadequacies of Ontario's legal aid system.
Liberal Party of Ontario	<p>The Liberal Plan for Ontario, called A Place to Grow, has a number of affordability measures that will help reduce poverty in Ontario. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buck-a-ride, province-wide that will reduce all fares on public transit to \$1 per ride, or \$40 per monthly pass, until 2024; • Removing the provincial 8% HST on all prepared foods and meals under \$20; • Rent control in all housing units; • Introducing a living wage; • Raising social assistance rates; and • \$10/day child care. <p>An Ontario Liberal Government is also committed to instituting a Basic Income Demonstration project that will build on the Basic Income Pilot that was abruptly</p>

cancelled by Doug Ford. We intend to quickly assess the results of this demonstration project as well as the results of the cancelled pilot program to consultatively develop a plan to move forward on basic income. We know that nutritious food helps kids learn and focus, so we'll ensure no student goes hungry by providing a free Ontario-grown breakfast for every K-12 student who needs one by expanding the Student Nutrition Program.

As part of our plan to build 1.5 million new homes across Ontario over the next 10 years, an Ontario Liberal government will build 138,000 deeply affordable homes. This includes:

- Building 78,000 new social and community homes through a net investment of \$10 billion over 10 years
- Building 38,000 supportive and assisted living units by investing a net \$5 billion over 10 years; and
- Building 22,000 new off-reserve homes for Indigenous peoples over 10 years by investing a net \$3.6 billion.

An Ontario Liberal government would provide municipal and non-profit partners with \$360 million annually to operate and improve social, supportive and community services. This funding will increase as the new supportive and assisted housing units are built.

Green Party of Ontario

Ontario Greens will restore the goal of ending homelessness in Ontario within ten years. We will increase the floor of the minimum wage each year by \$1, starting at \$16 in 2022, with a top-up in cities where the cost of living is higher, while also phasing in a Basic Income, with the first step being to double ODSP and OW rates and reduce aggressive clawbacks. The plan to end poverty also will:

- Resume the homelessness census canceled by the Ford government.
- Utilise a Housing First model to ensure that stable, permanent housing solutions are the first priority when helping those in need.
- Eliminate any unnecessary red tape, reporting requirements, and other barriers typically faced by those needing financial support.
- Include meaningful consultation with people who have lived experience with poverty and existing social assistance programs in the design of all programs and services aimed at client-centred approaches for reducing poverty.
- Annually report disaggregated data on the proportion of the population that experiences chronic homelessness, unmet health needs, food insecurity, lack of literacy, and low-paid work.
- Prohibit “payday” lending that takes advantage of those facing financial hardship as a violation of anti-racketeering laws, and work with credit unions to develop a low-cost, small loan alternative to help people get out of debt.
- Build 182,000 new permanently affordable community housing rental homes over the next decade, including 60,000 permanent supportive homes.
- Provide free and low-cost community programming in high-needs neighbourhoods, including but not limited to covering costs for free evening, weekend, March break, and summer permits.
- Invest in more Youth Wellness Hubs and community centres that offer access to local mental health services, spaces for social interaction, and supports for families.
- Fund a \$6B climate bonus for low-income households by adding a 1% climate surcharge levy on the province’s top 10% income earners.
- Immediately reverse the Ford government’s cuts to OSAP by converting loans to grants for low and middle income students and eliminating interest charges on student debt.

Ontario Greens also have a plan to support those living with a disability, and to address systemic racism and oppression, which are major contributing factors in poverty. These actions include:

- Fully funding the Anti-Racism Directorate, reversing the recent cuts.

- Requiring anti-racism and anti-oppression training for all public sector employees and legislators.
- Working with the federal government to implement the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Establish true nation-to-nation relationships with Indigenous peoples.
- Ensuring that interpreters, translators, or multilingual written materials are available in publicly funded services. Improve awareness of their availability.
- Over 4 years, giving 60,000 people the skills and experience to work in the green economy through a year of free college tuition plus a year of guaranteed work when they graduate with targeted recruitment of women, Indigenous people, and racialized communities.
- Immediately striking a task force to develop policies and initiatives that address the adverse effects of racism, homophobia, and transphobia on peoples' mental health and the barriers they face in accessing public services.
- Immediately repealing Bill 124 and increasing wages for ECEs, PSWs to \$25/hr and nurses to \$35/hr until they are able to engage in collective bargaining for fair pay
- Creating a comprehensive strategy to ensure equitable, inclusive and affirming access to care and treatment for 2SLGBTQIA+ communities within our healthcare system and long-term care.
- Dedicating resources and funding to directly support 2SLGBTQIA+ youth groups.
- Reviewing all Ontario laws for accessibility barriers and ensure that all future funding and policy choices are made through an accessibility lens.
- Updating, improving and implementing the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act as quickly as possible. Improving support for businesses to become more accessible.

How will your party support low-wage workers if elected?

Progressive Conservative Party

No answer received as of May 27

New Democratic Party of Ontario

We will raise the minimum wage to \$20 by the end of our first term, and provide all workers with 10 paid sick days. An Ontario NDP government will bring in universal mental health care, dental care, and pharmacare, so workers no longer have to pay for these costs out of pocket, and establish an Ontario Benefits program, which will provide all workers with a basket of benefits that stay with them wherever they work. We will also make it easier to join a union by bringing back 55% card check certification and introducing first contract arbitration, and we will bring in pay transparency legislation and strengthen and enforce pay equity legislation.

New Democrats will also ensure that temp, gig and contract workers are treated fairly. We'll prevent gig and contract workers from being misclassified as independent contractors when they are actually employees. Any worker doing the same job as the worker next to them will get the same wage, protections and benefits, whether they're part-time, temporary, or contract. After a standard probation period, anyone hired through a temp agency will be considered an employee of the client company. Finally, we'll hold the companies that use temp agencies responsible for their health and safety at work.

Liberal Party of Ontario

People who work for app-based platforms do the work of employees but aren't classified that way under the law. Gig work is work. We will modernize the definition of "employee" to include those in the gig economy so they get better access to benefits and protections, like sick days, workplace insurance, holiday and severance

pay and more. We'll do this in a way that ensures workers can maintain the flexibility and independence many enjoy.

When they took office, the Ford Conservatives scrapped basic, common-sense worker protections. We'll bring back these protections, including one that ensures everyone is paid equally and fairly for the work they do regardless of gender or employment status – including part-time, casual and temporary workers. We'll also bring back rules that give workers a minimum of three hours' pay for being on-call when they are not called in or work less than three hours.

We'll also require companies that have production or 'piece rate' quotas, such as parcel delivery services, to disclose these quotas to employees and we'll help ensure these quotas don't push people too hard and violate occupational health or safety standards.

Around half of working people in Ontario don't have access to basic workplace benefits like prescription drugs, dental care, vision care, mental health care, parental leave and retirement savings. We'll create a package of high-quality, affordable benefits that everyone can use, including self-employed, gig, contract and creative workers. Employers without comparable benefits would be required to enroll their staff while offering employees the option to opt-out.

We'll encourage employers to contribute to the cost of the package, which helps with talent retention. Small businesses will be given an extra two years before automatic enrolment is required and be provided with a tax credit to contribute up to 25% of their employees' benefits. We'll also make it easier for smaller employers or individual people to join pension plans, and provide low-income earners with dollar-for-dollar matching up to \$1,000 to help save for retirement or a rainy day. As one part of our plan to get everyone the help they need, we'll also require all employer health benefit plans to cover mental health services, and include mental health coverage in our new portable benefits plan.

Green Party of Ontario

Ontario Greens will support low-wage workers in the following ways:

- Implement a "Gig Workers' Bill of Rights," including, but not limited to, the following:
 - To protect gig workers and end the misclassification of employees, enact a presumption of employee status and the ABC test under the Employment Standards Act.
 - Ensure payment for all hours of work, from app sign-in until sign-out, with a clear and concise breakdown of how pay is calculated.
 - Ensure gig workers real wages are not reduced below the minimum wage by compensating for necessary work-related expenses.
 - Make gig work count towards Permanent Residency applications.
- Close the loopholes that can lead to precarious work, including stricter regulations relating to the temp agency industry.
 - Mandate that temp agency workers earn the same as directly hired workers when they do the same work, and that temp workers must become full hired employees after three months.
- Develop a program of portable extended health benefits for workers in the gig economy, retail and hospitality sectors that is tied to the employee even if they were to change employment.
- Provide all workers with full and equal access to employment rights and benefits programs like EI, CPP, and WSIB, as well as equal pay for equal work, regardless of whether the employee is permanent, part-time, temporary, or casual.
- Mandate that temp agency workers earn the same as directly hired workers when they do the same work, and that temp workers must become full hired employees after three months.

Will your party support the implementation of 10 employer-paid, seamlessly accessible sick days for all workers?

Progressive Conservative Party

No answer received as of May 27

New Democratic Party of Ontario

Yes. We will legislate 10 permanent, seamlessly accessible paid sick days for all workers, paid by employers, so they can stay home if they are sick or are caring for a sick child.

Liberal Party of Ontario

When the Ford Conservatives eliminated Ontario's paid sick day guarantee, it hurt workers. Rather than admit a mistake, they refused to bring back paid sick days even during a pandemic. Only after 412 days of public outcry and pressure did they allow for three temporary paid sick days.

As we navigate our way out of the pandemic, we'll provide 10 paid, job-protected sick days for all workers. Paid sick days can be used for getting tested, vaccinated, isolating or providing care to others. The days can also be used for major life events that require stepping back from work, like a death in the family or pregnancy loss. We'll also reintroduce a ban on employers making their workers produce a sick note in order to access the leave they need, and give businesses up to \$200 a day to compensate for the costs of workers taking more sick days.

Green Party of Ontario

Yes, Ontario Greens will increase the number of provincially-legislated paid sick days from three to ten, and provide small businesses financial support to fund the program. We will also ban employers from requiring a sick note from a medical practitioner when an employee is ill.

When will your party raise the minimum wage, and what will they raise it to?

Progressive Conservative Party

No answer received as of May 27

New Democratic Party of Ontario

New Democrats will raise the minimum wage to \$20 in 2026, with stable, predictable \$1-an-hour increases annually. We'll start by raising the minimum wage to \$16 on Oct. 1, 2022, then to \$17 on May 1, 2023, and then \$1 increases on May 1st annually until it reaches \$20, at which point it will be indexed to inflation.

Liberal Party of Ontario

One of the very first things the Ford Conservatives did in office was freeze the minimum wage at \$14 an hour and scrap a planned increase to \$15 an hour in 2019. We'll increase the minimum wage to \$16 an hour effective January 1, 2023 to help the more than 700,000 workers who were denied three years of increases to their wages. We'll then consult broadly and develop a living wage structure that factors different wage rates in different regions of the province – recognizing that some areas are more expensive to meet basic needs in than others.

Green Party of Ontario

Ontario Greens will increase the floor of the minimum wage each year by \$1, starting at \$16 in 2022, with a top-up in cities where the cost of living is higher.

What specifically will your party do to support people with disabilities live lives of dignity? Would your party raise social assistance rates? If so, when and by how much?

Progressive Conservative Party

No answer received as of May 27

New Democratic Party of Ontario

Under an NDP government, ODSP recipients will, for the first time in decades, be able to live above the poverty line. We will raise social assistance rates, for both ODSP and OW, by 20% in the first year of our government, followed by a doubling of current rates by 2023. We will index rates to inflation, so that no one in Ontario will ever have to live in legislated poverty again. And, we will work urgently with all stakeholders to design and implement a new and improved social assistance system.

New Democrats will also completely overhaul the broken Assistive Devices Program (ADP). As a first step, we will increase staffing and modernize service delivery so people with disabilities do not have to wait months for critically important devices.

The Ontario NDP will end the practice of forcing people to reapply for supports after turning 18, and cut wait lists for services like respite care, employment training, life skills, and supportive housing.

Finally, we will implement all recommendations from the Onley report to ensure Ontario is on the path to being fully accessible, in line with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

Liberal Party of Ontario

An Ontario Liberal government will increase Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program rates by 10% on July 1, 2022 and further increase ODSP rates by another 10% on July 1, 2023. In addition, we will ensure that individuals receiving social assistance can keep more of their earnings by increasing the amount of income that they can earn without impacting their assistance from \$2,400 (calculated monthly) to \$6,000 per year that would be calculated on a yearly basis. We will also replace the current complex rate structure with an inflation protected flat rate that treats everyone equally. And we will redefine “spouse” to give new couples receiving social assistance more support.

To help more people with developmental disabilities find homes they love, we'll build at least 2,500 more supportive homes and increase funding support for these homes. We'll provide all adults eligible for the Passport program at least \$6,000 to participate in their communities. We'll enhance funding and address price-gouging through the Assistive Devices Program for things like wheelchairs, hearing aids and lifts – and remove the need for medical certificates for basic mobility aids.

We'll strengthen existing Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) standards, enact new standards for education and health care and address accessibility barriers in the way we construct homes and buildings. We'll also increase the frequency of on-site AODA inspections and regularly report on compliance – as well as advancing disability accessibility training in relevant professions, like architecture and design. Finally, we'll appoint a stand-alone Minister for disability issues and include accessibility commitments in government mandate letters.

Green Party of Ontario

Ontario Greens would double Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) rates as a first step to implementing a Basic Income, and tie future increases to inflation. Other ways we will support Ontarians with disabilities include:

- Evaluating and improving the Assistive Devices Program to better meet the needs of those requiring assistive tools, including more up-to-date devices, training, and fewer barriers to access.
 - Ensuring that new affordable housing stock is accessible, and requiring affordable housing retrofits to meet the same standards.
 - Reviewing all Ontario laws for accessibility barriers and ensure that all future funding and policy choices are made through an accessibility lens.
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- Updating, improving and implementing the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act as quickly as possible.
- Strengthen Accessibility Standards under the AODA to ensure the standards meet the needs of people with disabilities.
- Provide clear, in-depth guidelines and deliver more responsive, comprehensive support for AODA implementation to organisations through free, independent technical advice.

Where would your party go from here [regarding the current plan to modernize social assistance] and how would your party fix the problems with social assistance?

Progressive Conservative Party

No answer received as of May 27

New Democratic Party of Ontario

First of all, an Ontario NDP government will raise social assistance rates by 20% in our first year, followed by a doubling of current rates by 2023, in order to ensure that no Ontarian has to live in legislated poverty.

We have also committed to a complete overhaul of the social assistance system, through meaningful consultation and co-design with social assistance clients. New Democrats will put a

stop to Doug Ford's scheme to privatize the delivery of social assistance employment service programs. We'll scrap "pay-for-performance" and return to a model where caseworkers provide wraparound services to those in need of their assistance.

Liberal Party of Ontario

*[*Note: Same answer provided for question below]*

The Ford Conservatives have no interest in genuinely reforming social assistance. They are interested in cuts, freezes and reducing costs, not supporting people to get and stay in the labour market. An Ontario Liberal government will work with and consult extensively with stakeholders to modernize the administration of social assistance, including how to deliver truly wraparound support and the right help to connect people with meaningful and stable work. We'll expand universal access to free career counseling, and we'll help more people get on-the-job training by funding opportunities through the Canada-Ontario Job Grant and SkillsAdvance.

Green Party of Ontario

Ontario Greens would phase in a Basic Income, with the first step being to double ODSP and OW rates and reduce aggressive clawbacks. We will eliminate any unnecessary red tape, reporting requirements, and other barriers typically faced by those needing financial support and maintain all existing supplementary supports that are available with current income assistance programs.

To ensure social assistance programs work for the people they are supposed to, we will include meaningful consultation with people who have lived experience with poverty and existing social assistance programs in the design of all programs and services aimed at client-centred approaches for reducing poverty.

Does your party support the pay-for-performance model? What does your party propose to do to support people to become job ready, and within the current labour market, provide stable, meaningful and accessible jobs?

Progressive Conservative Party

No answer received as of May 27

New Democratic Party of Ontario

New Democrats oppose the pay-for-performance model. We'll scrap "pay for performance," stop Doug Ford's scheme to privatize the delivery of social assistance employment service programs and return to a model where caseworkers provide wraparound services to those in need of their assistance. We will do this as part of our commitment to completely overhaul Ontario's social assistance system, through meaningful consultation and co-design with social assistance clients.

Liberal Party of Ontario

*[*Note: Same answer provided for question above]*

The Ford Conservatives have no interest in genuinely reforming social assistance. They are interested in cuts, freezes and reducing costs, not supporting people to get and stay in the labour market. An Ontario Liberal government will work with and consult extensively with stakeholders to modernize the administration of social assistance, including how to deliver truly wraparound support and the right help to connect people with meaningful and stable work. We'll expand universal access to free career counseling, and we'll help more people get on-the-job training by funding opportunities through the Canada-Ontario Job Grant and SkillsAdvance.

Green Party of Ontario

Ontario Greens believe that we need to provide fulsome supports that are thoughtfully designed to address the needs of people who may need social assistance. Government programs should prioritize non profit execution that centres on the people they aim to support. To do that, people with lived experience need to be included in the program design. Pay-for performance models are rarely successful. Rather than ushering people into low-wage precarious jobs, we should provide opportunities for people to succeed.

For youth, Ontario Greens will be creating youth hubs to provide a set of wrap-around services for support. We will also give 60,000 people the skills and experience to work in the green economy through a year of free college tuition plus a year of guaranteed work when they graduate with targeted recruitment of women, Indigenous people, and racialized communities and provide incentives for businesses involved with green retrofits, reforestation, and other forms of green economic activity to provide Ontario youth with valuable job experience.

If elected, how will your party work with and fund municipalities?

Progressive Conservative Party

No answer received as of May 27

New Democratic Party of Ontario

Municipalities play an essential role in delivering services for our communities, but Liberal and Conservative governments have spent decades downloading costs onto local governments. An Ontario NDP government will act as a true partner to municipalities. We'll stop the downloads and even look to upload where we can – for example, by restoring the province's share of municipal transit costs to 50%. We'll ensure that municipalities have the resources they need to serve their communities.

An Ontario NDP government will pass Bill 121, the Municipal Representation Protection Act, which requires the government to give public notice, conduct consultations, and get the approval of municipalities before cutting the size of councils or changing, amalgamating, or dissolving wards. We'll also look for new ways to strengthen municipal decision-making, including city charters, and recognize and support municipal governments' legitimate powers.

Liberal Party of Ontario

An Ontario Liberal government is committed to reviewing municipal fiscal sustainability. We will continue the joint federal-provincial investments needed, including the initial planned \$632 million in 2022, to maintain the operation and delivery of critical municipal services, like public transit and homelessness support. We will also make new, sustainable and annual investments totalling approximately \$1.3 billion annually to support municipalities, including \$375 million for municipal transit, \$360 million for operating social, supportive and community housing services, \$250 million for climate resilient infrastructure,

\$100 million for homelessness, \$100 million for cycling infrastructure, \$60 million for planning and housing approval and \$53 million for mental health first responders. Our plan to slash public transit fares to a buck-a-ride and replace all fare revenue will also help recover TTC ridership. An Ontario Liberal government will always be there for municipalities to support delivering the critical services that Ontarians rely on.

Green Party of Ontario

Ontario Greens will work with and fund municipalities in the following ways:

- Grant municipalities autonomy to implement revenue tools to fund critical infrastructure needs and services.
- Provincially fund 50% of shelter and community housing costs while allowing municipalities to maintain management control.
- Restore the 50% provincial cost-share for transit operations and support electrification plans for all municipal transit systems.
- Create a dedicated \$2B per year Climate Adaptation Fund for municipalities to bolster local infrastructure.
- Increase collaboration and consultation between municipalities and the province.
- Assess the use of City Charters as a mechanism to empower major Ontario cities, such as Toronto, and prevent inappropriate interference in local democracy by the provincial government.

Will your party provide funding to social assistance clients in the form of a monthly digital access benefit to ensure everyone can access the services they need?

Progressive Conservative Party

No answer received as of May 27

New Democratic Party of Ontario

New Democrats recognize that many people aren't comfortable with attending a remote tribunal hearing – and we will ensure that anyone who wants access to an in-person hearing can receive one. An Ontario NDP government would work with stakeholders and social assistance clients to explore the creation of a digital access benefit.

Liberal Party of Ontario

Internet has become an essential good for people, especially during two years of physical distancing. We need to improve access to internet while driving down costs through greater competition – leveraging existing public fibre assets to expand small, municipal or community-owned networks. Expanding these and other networks, along with investing in low Earth orbit satellites, will get affordable, high-speed internet to every Ontario household and business by 2025, including First Nations reserves.

To help close the digital divide across Ontario, we'll also require the Ontario government and the broader public sector to donate any surplus devices to communities and families in need. Our Ontario Liberal plan also commits \$35 over four years into the public library system, which serves an important function in connecting marginalized people to technology. Finally, we'll increase coordination between social assistance clients and the existing subsidized internet packages to ensure everyone can access the services they need.

Green Party of Ontario

Yes. We will also make internet access more available and affordable by making broadband internet an essential service and rolling out high-speed access across the province. We will use regulations to level the playing field for small, local internet service providers.

How will your party fund legal aid sustainably so that this work can continue?

Progressive Conservative Party

No answer received as of May 27

New Democratic Party of Ontario

An Ontario NDP government would reverse Doug Ford's cuts to Legal Aid and start fixing the inadequacies of Ontario's legal aid system. We'll increase funding for summary legal advice, unbundled legal services, and public interest litigation, and ensure more people qualify for legal assistance. We'll work with Legal Aid to provide appropriate supports.

Liberal Party of Ontario

An Ontario Liberal Government will reverse the Ford Conservatives' devastating cuts to legal aid and Ontario's tribunal system that have resulted in marginalized Ontarians being denied legal representation and justice – working to innovate the system so it is less costly, more accessible and more efficient. We will invest an additional \$133 million per year for Legal Aid to support legal services, including for new immigrants and refugees.

Green Party of Ontario

Ontario Greens will restore funding to Legal Aid by boosting their base budget by \$130 million and developing a long-term, stable funding plan.