



www.urbanneighbourhoods.ca

ONTARIO PROVINCIAL ELECTION QUESTIONNAIRE & RESPONSES

September 2011

1. Ontario Municipal Board:

Many municipalities are dismayed by OMB decisions on development projects. Issues include insufficient regard for local official plans and an imbalance of resources available to competing parties. **What reforms to the municipal appeal process would you support?**

NDP: The NDP will take action on long overdue changes to the current OMB process in order to more fairly consider community concerns about development proposals.

Other provinces have a board to which community members can appeal some municipal land-use decisions, but no other provincial board has powers as sweeping as those of the OMB.

There are many ways to improve the OMB and we look forward to consulting Ontarians about how best to move forward.

***LIBERAL:** We have worked constructively with all sectors to improve the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB), and we will continue this work. We are interested in hearing from the Federation of Urban Neighbourhoods (FUN) and other interested groups on constructive reforms to support the responsible growth and development of our communities.*

***GREEN:** The Green Party of Ontario would change the mandate of the OMB so that it can only be used to strengthen the community development and planning processes at the municipal level. The OMB should not be used to "end-run" planning at the local level.*

The stated principle of the OMB as an independent and unelected board is to ensure that long-term public and environmental interests are respected, outside of the constraints of short-term demands and election cycles.

This is a good principle. However, the OMB badly needs reform. Participating in the appeals process can be financially prohibitive for citizens and communities. This means developers are often able to win decisions simply by showing up.

The Green Party believes the mandate of the OMB is to help municipalities develop and stick to their own official development plans, and interpret the law when provincial legislation or regulations is in conflict with municipal regulations or plans

We are committed to government that works for people, and will focus on improving consultation processes and respecting local decision-making as key components of building strong communities.

PC: no response

2. Provincial Election Financing Reform

The federal government, several Ontario municipalities and other provincial governments have legislation that prohibit corporate and trade union contributions to election campaigns.

What is your position on prohibiting such contributions in provincial and municipal elections in Ontario?

***NDP:** We believe that measures are needed to enhance democratic participation and accountability at the municipal level. Too often municipal politicians are beholden to big donors such as developers rather than the needs of their constituents. The NDP proposed stronger restrictions on municipal donations such as reducing donation amounts and banning loans to candidates. These were defeated by the McGuinty government.*

***LIBERAL:** Ontario Liberals have made amendments to the Elections Act to protect and defend our democratic traditions by introducing tough sanctions for those that attempt to interfere with an elector's exercise of the vote.*

We introduced real-time disclosure of donations to political parties and leadership candidates, making Ontario a leader in transparency when it comes to donations to political parties and leadership candidates.

And we reformed third-party advertising, ensuring that there is genuine transparency while not limiting the free speech opportunities of those who wish to advertise in support of a party, candidate or issue.

We respect the right to participate in the political process and have no plans to make changes in that respect.

***GREEN:** The Green Party of Ontario strongly supports legislation that eliminates corporate and union donations to political parties, candidates and campaigns in provincial and municipal election.*

Unions and corporations don't vote – people do. And when unions and corporations are allowed to donate, the people in them are effectively allowed to exceed the contribution limits set by the province.

By ending corporate and union donations, we remove even the appearance of undue influence. It also saves politicians the awkwardness of voting on issues that benefit companies who may have donated to their campaign.

PC: no response

3. Traffic Congestion

Highways in and around Ontario cities are extremely congested. According to one study, the number of automobile trips made in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton area (GTHA) grew by 56% over a 20 year period compared to a population increase of 45%. Average commute times in the GTHA are the worst in North America causing lost productivity and enormous frustration. **What would you do to alleviate congestion in and between Ontario cities?**

NDP: Our platform outlines a number of measures to provide more affordable and convenient alternatives to private vehicle use. We will make transit more affordable by freezing transit fares. We will do this by having the province take on half of the cost of operating municipal transit systems. We will move forward with plans to expand our transit systems. We will make it easier and safer for people to ride bikes by implementing a \$60 million province-wide cycling infrastructure fund for investments in bike lanes, bike storage and bicycle tourism. We will promote planning for complete streets on municipal and provincial roadways, ensuring the safety of all users when roads are developed or redeveloped. We will make sure that major new developments are accessible by transit and other active modes of transportation, and provide facilities for cyclists.

***LIBERAL:** Ontario Liberals recognize the importance of an integrated transportation system that focuses on all options to keep our economy moving. Since 2003 we have applied this approach to:*

- Expand the focus of the Ministry of Transportation to include all modes of transportation, including public transit, active transportation and — in collaboration with our federal and municipal partners — areas such as marine, rail and air*
- Create Metrolinx, an integrated regional transit authority to improve public transit across the GTHA. Its \$50-billion Big Move plan will get people out of cars and onto public transit, and reduce congestion on our roads*
- Invest over \$10.8 billion to support public transit and \$14 billion to support roads across Ontario since 2003.*

During their term, the PCs filled in the hole dug for the Eglinton subway, contributed nothing to GO Transit and downloaded responsibility onto municipalities. The NDP platform barely touches on transit. They have consistently opposed strategic projects such as the Georgetown South Project and the construction of the Air Rail Link. Ontario Liberals are supporting municipalities in their efforts to develop an integrated transportation system. After years of neglect by the PCs and NDP, in 2003 we got to work, investing in public transit — over \$10 billion to communities across the province. We delivered on

our commitment to provide two cents per litre of provincial gas tax revenues as a source of long-term, sustainable funding for public transit. Since 2003, that funding has provided 120 communities with 93 municipal transit services and \$1.9 billion to improve and upgrade transit. In the next phase of the Ontario Liberal Plan, Forward. Together., we will expand GO train service by delivering full-day, two-way GO train service on all corridors — that is the equivalent of 71 million fewer car trips annually.

Unlike the PCs and NDP, we believe in dedicated funding to support municipal public transit.

When other parties were in power, they did nothing to support public transit.

Both the PCs and NDP voted against our provincial budgets, which included dedicated funding for municipal transit projects.

Ontario Liberals believe in investing in public transit — a better system will enable people to spend less time waiting for transit and more time with their families, and to enjoy more accessible service than ever before.

GREEN: *Gridlock affects our economy, our personal finances and our mental and physical health. The Green Party supports a comprehensive transportation strategy that includes rail, complete streets, roads and public transit to move people and goods in the most efficient way possible. Green MPPs will create a \$200 million fund for municipalities to invest in safe roads, active transportation, and complete streets. We will also improve transportation networks by revising the Planning Act to better support efficient transportation infrastructure and transit services. These improvements will not only make our lives easier and safer, they will provide us with an economic boost supporting small businesses and increasing efficiency in the flow of people, goods and services.*

The Green Party's transportation plan involves maintaining funding for public transit and working with municipalities to ensure that transit money is spent on projects that maximize ridership. We will invest \$400 million in tax credits over four years for affordable commuter benefits to support ride-sharing and car-pooling, flexible ways to get to work, and a provincial tax credit for transit users.

Inefficient transportation systems are a drain on Ontario's economy. The Green Party is focused on sensible transportation solutions that strengthen communities, improve local economies, increase productivity and relieve congestion.

PC: *no response*

4. Planning Reform:

As required by provincial legislation, many municipalities have recently updated their Official Plans or are in the process of doing so. Provincial legislation specifies intensification targets but does not require municipalities to include population densities by location in their Official Plans. This results in disagreements between municipalities, developers and residents on appropriate densities for specific sites. **Would you support planning reforms that would mandate that Official Plans provide clarity on this matter?**

***NDP:** If elected, we would explore ways to strengthen adherence to Official Plans. Including population densities in official plans could be helpful. There likely needs to be some flexibility allowing for site-specific amendments given that zoning of particular properties don't match Official Plan rules and objectives.*

***LIBERAL:** Since 2003, Ontario Liberals have made significant reforms to the land use planning system. The previous NDP and PC governments had put together patchwork policies that were hampering the ability of municipalities to effectively plan strong, prosperous communities. The new reforms have allowed Ontarians to build their vision of how their communities should look, feel and function at the local level.*

In 2005, Ontario Liberals enacted the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS). It is a key part of our province's policy-led planning system because it provides clear direction on land use planning and how development should take place. It also protects provincial interests such as sustainable development and environmental protection.

We are currently undertaking a review of the PPS to assess whether it is working effectively. The review includes opportunities for input by municipalities, stakeholders and the public. The goal is to make sure that the province's land use planning policies are effectively protecting Ontario's interests and to determine whether any changes are warranted. We are open to proposals from FUN and other organizations on ways to improve these policies.

***GREEN:** The Green Party believes that all stakeholders, including municipalities, ministries, and industries, must be involved in the design and implementation of public policy; this includes approval and compliance procedures for regulations. This will help avoid contradictory policies, and implementing regulations and decisions that have unintended consequences.*

The Green Party of Ontario would support greater communication across all stakeholders to eliminate disagreements on this matter. We would also review opportunities to include planning reforms that improve the clarity of the Official Plans.

***PC:** no response*

5. Ontario Legislative Viewshed

There has been recent efforts by some interests to “preserve the dignity of Ontario’s Capital Precinct” by protecting the heritage views of Queen’s Park from development appearing in the background. **What is your position on protecting the view of the silhouette of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario?**

***NDP:** The NDP is opposed to this development which we feel clearly compromises the historic and cultural importance of the viewscape of Queen’s Park. We have urged the McGuinty government to intervene in opposition to this development and have introduced legislation that would have protected the Queen’s Park from this development. However, the McGuinty government has refused to act.*

LIBERAL: Ontario Liberals support the protection of heritage properties and that is why we were the first government in 30 years to strengthen the Ontario Heritage Act. Under the act, we have provided municipalities with the power to protect properties in their community. With regard to the Ontario Legislature, there was a full process concerning a development that might impede the viewshed. We respect the process that was undertaken, which included decisions by the City of Toronto and the OMB. Planning decisions by the City of Toronto were made within the parameters of the city's existing Official Plan, as well as local urban development and heritage policies.

GREEN: The Green Party believes that the preservation of our natural and cultural heritage needs to be made a greater priority in Ontario. Green Party MPPs would seek to improve protection for existing urban green and heritage spaces that remain, including the area of Queen's Park.

We would support preserving the heritage views of Queen's Park, after consultation with stakeholders and provided that there is no undue financial consequences to this decision.

PC: no response

6. Anti-SLAPP

Many municipalities and organizations in Ontario have passed resolutions calling on the provincial government to protect citizens and adopt legislation to protect citizens against strategic lawsuits against public participation (anti-SLAPP). **Would you support such legislation?**

NDP: Yes. The NDP has already introduced private members' legislation to this effect. We have committed in our platform to putting an end to developer "SLAPP" lawsuits used to silence opposition to megaprojects.

LIBERAL: In recent years, a number of individuals and organizations have raised concerns about lawsuits that they believed were intended to deter people from participating in public discussions on topics of public interest.

Ontario Liberals took steps to prevent misuse of the court system. Changes to the Rules of Civil Procedure, which came into force on January 1, 2010, provide judges with new tools to limit vexatious litigation.

Any Anti-SLAPP legislation would require a delicate balance to ensure abusive litigation is stopped but legitimate actions can continue. That is why Ontario Liberals established an Anti-SLAPP Advisory Panel and invited it to advise on methods for dealing with SLAPPs, including creating or implementing legislation.

The government is considering their advice, along with the advice of other members of the public who have commented.

GREEN: A key point in the Green Party's platform is to remove barriers that prevent citizens from being heard. We will give citizens a greater say in public consultations, and support ending lawsuits that prevent citizen participation in planning decisions.

The Green Party would introduce anti-SLAPP legislation. We support shifting the burden of proof to the plaintiff to show that a case has substantial merit or the defendant has no valid defense, or the harm done to the plaintiff outweighs the harm done to the public interest by allowing the defendants to resume public participation.

We believe that the role of government should be to empower local communities, and we are committed to engaging community members. We promote a model for the consultation process in which communities are supported and encouraged to provide input.

PC: *no response*