



## Provincial Party Responses to FUN 2014 Election Survey – 7 Questions

On May 16, 2014 we emailed the following survey to the leader of the Green Party of Ontario and the Parliamentary offices of the leaders of the Liberal, Progressive Conservative, and NDP parties, giving a deadline of May 30, 2014 to respond. A spokesperson Mr. Hudak replied that the address was not for campaign matters but in any event the Conservatives had a campaign policy of not replying to surveys. The Liberals did not respond and the NDP asked for an extension. We received responses from the Green Party on May 30 and from the NDP on June 6. Below are the answers of the two parties in the order we received them.

### 1. Provincial Election Financing Reform

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

Q.1 Would you support introduction and passage of such legislation?

**Green Party of Ontario:** Yes The GPO would introduce and pass legislation to prohibit corporate and trade union contributions to political campaigns. The problem lies in the fact that corporations and unions don't vote – people do. And when corporations and unions are allowed to donate, the people in them are effectively allowed to exceed the contribution limits of other individuals set by the province.

**Ontario NDP:** The Ontario NDP believes that we need to take action to lessen the role of big money in politics. In particular, we believe that efforts must be taken to enhance democratic participation and accountability at the municipal level. Far too often, big donors such as developers have a disproportionate amount of influence in the political process. This can lessen the responsiveness of politicians to the needs of those they are supposed to represent: their constituents. The Ontario NDP has previously proposed measures to strengthen restrictions on municipal donations, including the reduction of maximum donation values and banning loans to candidates. Unfortunately, these proposals were defeated by the Liberal government.

### 2. Transportation

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. In addition, inter-urban transportation has not progressed; high-speed rail plans have sat on the shelf.

Q.2. What would you do to alleviate highway traffic congestion in and between Ontario cities? If you are proposing new or improved public transportation options, what will be the timetable for their completion, and how will their construction and operation be funded?

**Green Party of Ontario:** We waste months of our lives stuck in traffic. The average daily commute time in the GTHA is 80 minutes long. That's the equivalent of eight 40--hour work weeks ----- or about seven years in a working lifetime.

Gridlock now costs our economy \$6 billion a year in lost productivity. Soon that number will be \$15 billion. And that doesn't include the cost of greenhouse gas pollution, which threatens our way of life.

We need a new transportation plan in our province, we need to figure out how to pay for it, and we need to implement it without political games. We can't afford to sit in traffic while the other parties make promises they won't keep. We must have the courage to say that we are willing to pay for what we need.

Your Green MPPs will demand that Ontario establish a dedicated transit fund-----one that politicians can't waste on things like moving gas plants-----to build new transit and support the operation of existing transit. And we will insist on an honest plan to pay for it.

The GPO will work with other parties to implement dedicated revenue tools that are fair and progressive, such as land value capture, congestion charges, gas taxes and parking fees, to raise \$3 billion a year to build and operate transit in communities across Ontario.

**Ontario NDP:** Congestion is costing Ontario and Ontarians too much in lost time, lost profits, and lost opportunities. We need to build transit projects for the next decade and the next generation, but we also need to improve service right now. Over the last decade of Liberal rule, delays have been the norm and have plagued efforts to improve our transit system. It's time to invest in immediate service improvements and get shovels in the ground on priority projects.

The Ontario NDP is committed to making substantial investments in both transit and transportation infrastructure, which will help alleviate traffic congestion across the province.

In addition to the \$29 billion over 10 years for transit and transportation projects in the province's existing fiscal framework, the Ontario NDP will further increase funding by \$250 million annually to kick-start priority projects.

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We are committed to the Big Move projects such as light rail lines in Brampton, Mississauga, Hamilton, and those along the Finch and Sheppard corridors. However, there is a need to prioritize key projects. In Toronto, the long-delayed Downtown Relief Line is a project that desperately needs to move forward. And after years of debate and delay, Scarborough can't be left waiting for transit. We need Clean Trains now, which means electrifying routes such as the Union-Pearson Air-Rail link. We are investing a further \$250 million annually to widen 60km of highways annually and \$20 million annually to restore passenger service on Ontario Northland Rail. We will also restore funding for new buses in 127 communities across Ontario, which Kathleen Wynne cut. By investing \$60 million per year, we will get new buses on the road and serving families across the province.

### 3. Ontario Municipal Board

Many municipalities and community groups 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.

Q.3 What reforms to the land use appeal process would you support? What will you do to redress the power imbalance between developers and residents, with regard to the OMB process?

**Green Party of Ontario:** 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 that developers are often able to win decisions simply by showing up.

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

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

**Ontario NDP:** The Ontario NDP will complete the review of municipal land use planning and we support reforms to the Ontario Municipal Board, which the Liberal government has refused to consider. Ontario is the only jurisdiction with such a quasi-judicial body that has the power to overturn decisions made by local governments. We think democratic accountable institutions can best make these decisions and that the OMB needs to be reformed. Our MPP for Trinity-Spadina, Rosario Marchese, fought for this principle when he introduced a Private Member's Bill to rein in the unaccountable OMB which has too often set aside the official growth plans that municipalities have laboured to create, ignored the wishes of communities, and misinterpreted the laws regarding development.

It is clearly time for a more sensible, accountable OMB. An Ontario NDP government will allow local councils to set up their own appeal bodies---the check and balance the OMB was supposed to be, but with the transparency and accountability that the Liberal government has actively prevented.

### 4. Official Plans

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. Q.4 Would you support mandating that Official Plans provide clarity on this matter?

**Green Party of Ontario:** 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 the implementation of regulations and decisions that have unintended consequences.

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

**Ontario NDP:** The Ontario NDP is committed to exploring methods that would strengthen adherence to Official Plans. We believe that the inclusion of population densities in official plans could be quite helpful regarding the cited disagreements. However, we also recognize that there may need to be some flexibility that would allow for site-specific amendments as the zoning of particular properties may not match Official Plan rules or objectives.

## 5. Protection of the Ontario Legislature's Viewshed

There has been 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.

Q.5 What is your position on protecting the view of the silhouette of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario?

**Green Party of Ontario:** As the seat of government and as an historical landmark the dignity of Queen's Park is important to the Green Party of Ontario. With regard to protecting the view of the silhouette, it is clear that neither the City of Toronto nor Provincial Government has adopted any policies to guide future development in the area to replace the Official Plan that was in effect up until 2005. It would be irresponsible to allow a lack of any policy to shape the long-term character of the area surrounding Queen's Park. The Green Party supports protecting the dignity of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and would call upon the Government of Ontario to consult with Ontarians, residents of Toronto and other stakeholders to determine what protections should exist and how they should be balanced by the need to intensify developments around public transit infrastructure.

**Ontario NDP:** The Ontario NDP is opposed to development projects that undermine the cultural or historic importance of the Capital Precinct. We have strongly urged the Liberal government to intervene in order to prevent infringing development that and have previously introduced legislation that would have protected Queen's Park from this kind of development.

## 6. Anti-SLAPP Legislation

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 (SLAPP). The Anti-SLAPP Advisory Panel chaired by Dean Moran reported in 2010; and a government Bill, Bill 83, Protection of Public Participation Act was introduced in 2013. This legislation died on the order paper when the election was called.

Q.6 Would you support re-introduction and passage of this legislation?

**Green Party of Ontario:** Yes. We support Bill 83 and efforts to stop SLAPP lawsuits.

A key tenet in all Green Party policy 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 current system makes it very difficult for the average citizen to get involved in community decisions. The threat of SLAPP lawsuits discourages community involvement in major decisions that affect them year-round. Public participation should not be limited to election day.

Citizens who take the time to speak out for and defend their communities should not be turned away. They also should not face intimidation or the prospect of debilitating costs. Everyone deserves to be heard.

SLAPP lawsuits silence citizens who stand up to protect our communities. They are wrong, and government needs to act now to stop them.

**Ontario NDP:** Yes. Ontario NDP leader Andrea Horwath was the first member of the legislature to put forward anti-SLAPP legislation in 2008. The Ontario NDP remains committed to protecting the public against strategic lawsuits that are intended to silence dissent and democracy. We were pleased that after years of pressure from us and others, the government finally decided to move forward with Bill 83. The Ontario NDP was frustrated by the glacial pace with which the government brought this bill through the legislature and, as government; we are committed to moving forward with similar legislation in a timely manner.

## 7. Voting Reform

On June 11 2013, Toronto City Council voted to ask the Ontario Government for permission to use ranked ballots for municipal elections. A Private Member's Bill, Bill 166, The Toronto Ranked Ballot Elections Act to allow the City of Toronto to pass a ranked ballot by-law for City Council elections was introduced in 2013. This legislation died on the order paper when the election was called.

Q.7 Would you support re-introduction and passage of this legislation?

**Green Party of Ontario:** Yes. The GPO is strongly in support of electoral reform at all levels of government. Our current first-past-the-post elections are typically characterized by strategies that secure a few key votes in a few key ridings. This system does not represent the wishes of the majority of voters.

All voters are hurt by our current outdated first-past-the-post system. Liberal voters in ridings held by Conservatives for decades feel their vote doesn't count. Likewise Conservative voters in long held Liberals feel the same. Voters who support newer parties often have no voice in the legislature.

Electoral reform will eliminate the need for strategic voting, reduce negative campaigning, and ensure every vote counts. The GPO believes that the introduction of ranked ballots is a great way to start the process of electoral reform, but that there is a long way to go before we completely repair our damaged electoral system.

**Ontario NDP:** The Ontario NDP believes that it is fundamentally important to empower municipalities. This includes allowing Toronto City Council to choose a voting system that works best for its residents. The Ontario NDP is proud of Toronto City Council for expressing interest in pursuing an alternative voting system and we support them in that endeavor. Jonah Schein, the NDP MPP for Davenport, introduced Bill 163, An Act to amend the Municipal Elections Act on February 25th, 2014. This bill would have given the City of Toronto the authority to determine how its representative are elected including, but not limited, to a ranked ballot. We are committed to re-introducing legislation that would allow the City of Toronto to choose its own mechanism.