

Confederation of Canadian Unions
Political Party Questionnaire for 2018 Ontario Provincial Election

Greetings,

The Confederation of Canadian Unions (CCU) is the nation's largest federation of independent labour unions. Founded in 1969 on the initiative of labour organizers Kent Rowley and Madeleine Parent, the CCU is dedicated to the establishment of a democratic, independent Canadian labour movement free of the influence of American-based international unions. The CCU includes almost 20,000 members in affiliated unions across the country in both the public and private sectors.

Like previous federal and provincial elections, the Confederation of Canadian Unions has once again established a political education campaign, named "Raise Your Voice, Cast Your Vote," to help its membership make informed voting choices for the Ontario Election on June 7, 2018. The following questions have been sent to all four major parties in Ontario, including the Progressive Conservative Party, the Liberal Party, the New Democratic Party and the Green Party.

The answers from each party will be posted on the CCU website (www.ccu-csc.ca). We ask that answers to each of the questions range from 200 to 300 words, and returned in Word format to Sean Cain at media@ccu-csc.ca by May 10, 2018 so that we can readily prepare our membership for the vote on June 7, 2018.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me by phone or email. And thank you for participating.

Sincerely,

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ONTARIO LIBERAL PARTY RESPONSES

Economics

1. According to Statistics Canada, economic inequality has been on the rise since the 1970s, and currently, the richest 10% of income earners control almost 60% of all wealth. How will your party reverse this trend and reduce the growing levels of economic inequality in Ontario?

We are committed to continuing to build an Ontario where everyone has the opportunity to reach their full potential. We will continue to make strategic investments across government – including in health, education and housing programs to address poverty. Including:

- Raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour.
- Free tuition for over 200,000 low-and middle-income students.
- Through the Fair Housing Plan, we're making it easier to buy and rent a home.
- Through OHIP+ we will provide the people of Ontario aged 24 and under as well as those 65 and over, with free prescription medications.

We know that the ability to meet one's basic needs improves health, education and employment outcomes. In a province as prosperous as Ontario, we know that every family deserves this dignity, as well as the security of a life free from poverty.

Unlike the PCs that voted against the above and against the Basic Income Pilot, we are committed to continuing to make sure that people have the resources they need and that they are able to take part in the economic growth of this province.

Ontario Liberals are looking for evidence-based solutions that work. We want to help end poverty while improving services - making them simpler, more efficient, and more supportive for the people who need them the most. In 2017, we launched our three-year Basic Income Pilot to test a different approach to better support vulnerable workers, improve health and education outcomes for people on low incomes, and help ensure that everyone shares in Ontario's economic growth.

The pilot will determine whether Basic Income is an effective way to deliver income supports more efficiently, while improving health, employment and housing outcomes for people in Ontario. The Pilot provides an automatic, 'no strings attached' monthly benefit to people in Ontario while ensuring that none of the enrolled would fall below a minimum income level.

Participants in the Pilot will be able to increase their total income by combining a basic income with income they earn through work. The basic income amount will decrease by \$0.50 for every dollar an individual earns through work. Income from other programs, such as the Canada Pension Plan and Employment Insurance, would reduce the Basic Income payment dollar for dollar. But income related to children, such as the Ontario Child Benefit and child support, would be exempt.

People receiving support through Ontario Works who enter the Pilot will continue to receive drug benefits, and people on the Ontario Disability Support Program will continue to receive drug benefits and dental benefits.

On income security reform, we have eliminated the provincial clawback of child support payments and the Canada Child Benefit, putting thousands of dollars into the pockets of families receiving social assistance across the province. We introduced a reloadable payment card for individuals on ODSP and made changes so that Social Assistance clients can use their health card to access prescription drugs. We have raised social assistance rates in 13 of the last 14 years and also increased the asset limits and gift exemptions.

We now have a proposed plan for income security reform that begins to respond to all key action areas in the Income Security Roadmap and would situate Ontario as a leader in the fundamental transformation of social assistance. Our plan starts with a strong emphasis on turning social assistance into a simpler, responsive and person-focused service. We would invest an additional \$2.3 billion over the next three years, the largest single investment in social assistance over the last quarter century, to support a significant start on reform.

Our plan would mean more money in the hands of those relying on social assistance through a 9% increase to rates over three years, the introduction of a standard flat rate, changes to income exemptions (including benefits like CPP-D), access to mandatory vision and hearing benefits, and the elimination or simplification of a range of overly complex rules.

We are committed to ensuring that everyone in Ontario has the opportunity to achieve their potential and that is part of our plan for fairness, and providing care and opportunity, not cuts, during this period of rapid economic change.

2. The partial sell-off of Hydro One has been a boondoggle for Bay Street, Wall Street and the investment class, and a disaster for workers and consumers. Rates have skyrocketed for Ontarians, and the Ontario Financial Accountability Office stated that taxpayers would have saved \$1.8 billion if the government had taken on traditional debt to fund infrastructure projects instead of the sell-off. Will your party commit to fully returning Hydro One back to public ownership and democratic control?

Our government has taken Hydro One public to improve long-term performance and unlock the value in this company. This is part of the single largest infrastructure investment in Ontario's history: more than \$160 billion over 12 years, supporting 110,000 jobs every year. Hydro One continues to be subject to multiple levels of oversight, including the Ontario Energy Board, which retains sole discretion to approve electricity rates.

Under new management, Hydro One has improved its customer focus and service to customers. Improved management and efficiency programs led to \$89.5 million in savings last year alone - savings that directly benefit the ratepayer. The company has improved rates of billing accuracy and call centre satisfaction, and taken customer-oriented actions like ending the practice of security deposits for new customers, and voluntarily ending winter disconnections.

Our government recognizes that the cost of electricity is a concern for many Ontarians. That's why we introduced the Fair Hydro Plan, reducing bills by 25% across the province. Customers on a low-income or in expensive-to-serve rural areas are receiving even greater reductions - up to 40-50%. Under the Fair Hydro Plan, rates are being held to the rate of inflation for four years.

3. According to opinion polls, a large majority of Ontarians support greater funding for social services like health care, child care, housing and education. What will your party do to ensure these programs are properly funded in both the short and long term?

Ontario Liberals believe firmly that government has a role to play in providing care and opportunity for everyone.

That is why we introduced programs like full-day kindergarten, free college or university tuition, free prescription medication for eligible children and youth under the age of 25, and a \$15 per hour minimum wage.

Our current plan will invest more in hospitals, mental health, long-term care and child care to help people get ahead today and prepare for tomorrow. This includes:

- Increasing investments in health care by more than \$5 billion over three years;
- Providing \$822 million in 2018–19 in additional hospital funding;
- Making over 2.8 million more hours of personal support care available, with more caregiver respite, over 284,000 more nursing visits and 58,000 more therapy visits;
- Making an additional investment of \$2.1 billion over four years to improve access to mental health care and addictions services for more people, bringing the total funding to \$17 billion over four years;
- Extending OHIP+ by providing the people of Ontario age 65 and over with free prescription medication;
- Introducing free preschool for children aged two-and-a-half until eligible for kindergarten, beginning in September 2020;
- Reducing financial barriers for students from low- and middle-income families so that they can pursue postsecondary education through the newly transformed OSAP program;
- Strengthening services for approximately 47,000 adults with developmental disabilities to enable choice, independence and inclusion; and
- Reforming the social assistance system to focus on people rather than on rules and regulations, improve incomes, and simplify the system to better support those who need it.

These investments will ensure that social services receive the funding they need now and into the future.

Labour

4. Statistics Canada reports that on average, unionized workers in Ontario enjoy 24% higher wages than non-unionized workers in the same line of work, as well as stronger pensions, superior health and safety standards, longer vacation time, better health and drug benefits, and more rights in the workplace. Does your party believe that unions play a positive role in our economy? If so, what policies will your party implement to create a climate that is easier for unions to organize?

We believe that unions have and will continue to play a vital role for Ontario and its workers every day. We will continue to build partnerships with our workers' unions on many fronts, from enhancing health and safety to advancing employment standards rights. Recently, we undertook the Changing Workplaces Review designed to update the province's labour and employment laws for the first time in a generation. Many unions were key sources of

information and input into the Review's final report, and continued to play that role as we responded with Bill 148 - the *Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act*. In that Act, key changes were made to enhance and modernize workers' ability to choose unionization, including changes to the *Labour Relations Act* that:

- provided unions access to lists of employees in proposed bargaining units for the first time;
- made first contract mediation-arbitration available to all newly formed bargaining units;
- extended just cause protection to workers between certification and a first collective agreement;
- enhanced automatic certification to protect workers from inappropriate intimidation from any employer seeking to stop workers from exercising a right to choose to join a union;
- permitted, for the first time, a union to apply for the amalgamation of a new bargaining unit into an existing bargaining unit with the same employer, creating a larger unit; and
- extended card check certification to temporary help agency workers, home care workers and to building services workers.

More recently our government passed Bill 53 - the *Government Contract Wages Act* - which will, for the first time in a generation, update the province's fair wage policy to ensure that contractors in the construction, building cleaning, and security services industries are not incentivized to "race to the bottom" for any government contract, undercutting union rates and enhancements for workers. We have enshrined the fair wage policy in legislation, and included a robust enforcement mechanism.

5. Last year, Canada joined 164 other countries in ratifying International Labour Organization (ILO) convention 98, which commits governments around the world to respecting union rights and collective bargaining. Will your party commit to protecting the rights of unions to organize and bargain collectively, both in the public and private sectors?

Yes, we supported the ratification of ILO convention 98. Including through the *Labour Relations Act* enhancements passed in Bill 148, we remain committed to protecting the rights of unions to organize and bargain collectively, to ensuring that unionized workers have their rights protected and that all workers have access to a robust and meaningful labour relations regime.

Health Care

6. Our publicly administered, universal health care system is cherished throughout Ontario. More of our health services, however, are being de-funded and privatized. What policies will your party implement to ensure that health care in the province remains under public control and is accessible to everyone?

Universal access to health care and a commitment to health equity are fundamental values underpinning our health care system. Ontario Liberals believe in a universal publicly-funded health care system. Its preservation is essential for the health of Ontarians now and in the future.

During this mandate Ontario Liberals also passed legislation to ensure that appropriate hospitals or other health facilities are designated as community health facilities so there is consistent quality oversight through detailed reporting. These changes also included an enhanced inspection regime to prohibit the creation of new private hospitals and allows the Private Hospitals Act to be repealed at a later date.

7. There are more than 30,000 people in Ontario on waiting lists for long-term care beds, and hundreds of thousands are actively seeking but cannot find a family doctor. What will your party do to fund more doctors, nursing positions and hospital beds throughout the province?

We recognize that a growing and aging population is increasing the pressures faced by our healthcare system. And we know we need to relieve any stress that families may face in accessing care because it's the right thing to do.

With this Budget, we are making a deliberate choice to invest in care for the people of Ontario by investing more in healthcare-- in hospitals, home care, mental health, and long-term care.

We're increasing our health care spending by 5%, to reduce wait times and increase access across the entire healthcare system. So that everyone in Ontario can receive the care they rely on, where and when they need it. We are investing in care for the people of Ontario, because it means a better quality of life for everyone living in this province.

8. Canada remains the only country in the world with a universal health care system that doesn't include prescription medication. Drug prices continue to skyrocket for Ontarians and more people have to choose between getting the medications they need and paying for necessities like food or rent. Will your party commit to creating a universal, comprehensive, publicly-administered and sustainable Pharmacare program in the province of Ontario?

OHIP +, a program that has provided over 1 million young individuals with free prescription drugs since January 1, will be expanded to make prescription drugs free for people 65 and over.

Beginning August 1, 2019, more than 4,400 prescription drugs will be available free of charge to everyone 65 and over, no co-payment and no deductible.

This expansion will make life more affordable for 2.6 million seniors and their families, and will result in prescription drugs being free for nearly one in two Ontarians. This makes us that much closer to the goal of pharmacare for all people in Ontario.

Ontario Liberals are leading the way in national pharmacare by expanding OHIP+ to seniors. Similar to the leadership role the Premier played in enhancing the Canada Pension Plan (CPP)The government continues to work collaboratively with its federal, provincial and territorial partners to improve the affordability, accessibility and appropriate use of prescription drugs for Canadians.

Ontario Liberals will continue to fight for historic programs like OHIP + and the services that all Ontarians need and deserve.

Education

9. Only 20% of young children today have access to regulated child care spaces in Ontario. What will you do in government to create more child care spaces? Also, will you commit to creating a universal, public child care program for all children in the province?

Building an affordable, accessible and high-quality child care system is a top priority for the Ontario Liberal Party. We have begun expanding access to child care through our commitment to create 100,000 new spaces for children aged 0 to 4. This expansion is supported by \$1.6-billion in capital funding to support the creation of 45,000 new spaces in schools and community locations.

We have also committed \$248 million in operating funding to support the first two years of expansion through child care fee subsidies, expanded access to affordable licensed child care spaces, and reduced waitlists to help parents access quality child care for children aged 0 to 4.

These investments will improve access for young children, and support the implementation of free preschool child care in September of 2020. Our plan will save families an estimated \$17,000 per child, allowing parents to go back to work when they choose and help give children the best start in life.

And we're supporting Ontario's world-class early childhood educators and program staff by improving compensation through a wage grid aligned with early childhood education workers working in full-day kindergarten.

10. What specific policies will your party implement to hire more teachers and reduce class sizes in primary and secondary schools in Ontario?

The Ontario Liberal Party understands that smaller class sizes give teachers the tools to provide an enriched learning environment for our students.

That's why we put caps on primary class size and in 2017-18 we made new investments to cap our full-day kindergarten classes at 30 students, and are lowering the cap to 29 students next year. For grade 4-8 students, we reduced the average class size from 26 to 24 and are investing in hundreds of new teachers to bring the funded average class size below 23 by 2020-21.

The Ontario Liberal Party also believes that every student must have access to the supports they need to reach their full potential, including students with special needs. We recently announced we will add another \$300 million over the next three years, bringing special education funding to \$3 billion next year. This funding will help to eliminate the waitlists for special education assessments and means 600 additional staff forming multidisciplinary teams of social workers, psychologists, behavioural specialists and speech-language pathologists to build board capacity and help teachers, education assistants and other staff better understand and adapt to the unique needs of their students. It also includes an additional \$30 million per

year through the Special Incidence Portion for up to 500 more Education Assistants who will support our highest needs students.

By adding more staff in classrooms and clearing special education assessment backlogs, this investment will provide much-needed additional support to our students with special needs.

11. Ontario university student debt is now over \$850 million, and our province has the highest undergraduate tuition fees in the country, more than twice as high as Quebec and Manitoba. What will your party do to lower tuition fees and reduce student debt?

Ontario's greatest strength is its people. When everyone in the province is able to access education and training, find good jobs and support their families — our economy grows.

The Ontario Liberal Party firmly believes that attending college or university should be based on a student's potential to learn and not on their ability to pay. That's why we've launched one of the most ambitious reforms of student assistance in North America to make postsecondary education more affordable for hundreds of thousands of students.

The new OSAP is providing more generous financial support than ever before, including free tuition for hundreds of thousands of low- and middle-income students. This year, more than 235,000 students are receiving free tuition – that's one-third of all college and university students.

Ontario students graduate with the third-lowest average student debt because of Ontario's robust and progressive student assistance program. Adjusted for inflation, the average OSAP debt of university graduates and college graduates has decreased 17 per cent (\$3,924) from 2001 to 2014.

In 2014, we provided students with almost \$1.3 billion in grants and loans and 70 per cent of this was money students won't have to repay.

Under the Liberal Party's leadership, Ontario has become one of the provinces where the gap between high and low income students is the narrowest in terms of participation rates in post-secondary education.

Assisting Ontario students with their costs is part of Ontario's plan to keep postsecondary education within reach for all families, while building the best-educated workforce in the world.

The Environment

12. What policies will your party implement to reduce climate change and protect the environment, and how will you pay for them?

Ontario has made great strides in fighting climate change. We have already met our 2014 target of a 6% reduction on carbon emissions, largely due to our elimination of coal-fired power plants. And we are on track to meet our ambitious, legislated carbon reduction targets for 2020, 2030 and 2050 due to our carbon market.

In 2017, we implemented a “best-in-class” cap and trade carbon pricing system, according to the Environment Commissioner, joining Quebec and California in North America’s largest carbon market as of January 1st. This system provides businesses with the flexibility to choose how they will meet the cap, whether it be through upgrading to cleaner technology or purchasing carbon allowances. Our plan guarantees reductions every year as the cap on pollution decreases, in line with our legally binding carbon reduction targets. Third party economic experts agree our plan guarantees emission reductions at the cheapest price possible for people and the economy.

Thus far, our carbon market has raised \$2.4 B in proceeds. By law, every penny of those proceeds must be re-invested into programs, through Ontario’s Climate Change Action Plan, to reduce greenhouse gas pollution and help Ontario residents and businesses fight climate change and save money. These initiatives include:

- Renovating approximately 17,500 social housing apartment building units
- Implementing 180 projects in 98 hospitals to create energy-related savings;
- Creating healthier, modern and more comfortable learning environments with new energy-efficient upgrades in nearly 600 schools across the province;
- Engaging 140,000 people in Ontario who will receive home energy audits and no-cost smart thermostats;
- Helping families and businesses save money with energy efficiency rebates through GreenON.ca, including \$7,200 off insulation, \$5,000 off high-performance windows, \$20,000 off ground source heat pumps, \$5,800 off air source heat pumps and \$100 off smart thermostats;
- Investing in GreenON Industries, a \$200M program to support major carbon reduction projects for large industrial emitters and improve business competitiveness;

We will continue to help businesses transform their operations and create good jobs in the clean tech sector. The Ontario Liberal Party believes fighting climate change is a major economic opportunity. The recently released Ontario Cleantech Strategy, along with investments such as the Low Carbon Innovation Fund, the Global Market Accelerator Fund, and the Cleantech Equity Fund, are helping Ontario businesses deliver and implement the next generation of clean technology solutions.

This will build a competitive advantage for Ontario, and ensure that we do not get left behind during this accelerated period of global change. Since launching their carbon markets, both California and Ontario have led their respective countries in economic growth. Meanwhile, Quebec’s unemployment recently reached a 41-year low.

The Ontario Liberal Party is also focused on reducing emissions from our transportation system using carbon market proceeds through initiatives such as:

- Providing incentives of up to \$14,000 to help Ontario residents switch to electric vehicles
- Installing over 300 electric vehicle (EV) chargers, including over 140 level 3 fast chargers, creating the largest public fast-charging network in Canada
- Making it easier for condo residents to charge their electric vehicles at home
- Partnering with 118 municipalities to build bike lanes and bike parking and support new cycling plans
- Helping the commercial transportation sector reduce its emissions through rebates for new low-carbon vehicles and fuel saving devices

Our Liberal government has also made historic investments in clean energy in Ontario. This includes the complete elimination of coal generation in the province, which was accomplished in 2014 and remains the single largest climate change action undertaken in North America to date. It also virtually eliminated smog days in Ontario. In 2017, more than 95% of electricity in Ontario was generated from emissions-free sources of power.

Lastly, Ontario Liberals created and have continually expanded the Greenbelt. We are committed to preserving the essential watershed, agricultural land, and natural heritage areas that are the key to the continued success of the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) region. As of 2017, the Greenbelt contains over two million acres of land – an area larger than Prince Edward Island – that stretches from Niagara to Peterborough to Lake Huron. It is the largest and most strongly protected greenbelt in the world.

13. One of the best ways to reduce our carbon footprint on the environment is public transportation. What will you do to make public transportation throughout the province more affordable and accessible to Ontarians?

The Ontario Liberal Party is committed to building more affordable, accessible transit infrastructure, with an historic investment of \$79 billion over the next 10 years.

We will make it easier for commuters and families to get around the GTHA by moving forwards with the implementation of GO RER, the largest rail project in Canada. We will quadruple the number of weekly trips from about 1,500 to nearly 6,000 by 2024-25. We are building new stations and enhancing existing stations including the Kipling Bus Terminal, Mimico Station, Rutherford GO station and the Milton GO Station, and are advancing the development of twelve new stations (including six SmartTrack stations). We will deliver two-way, all-day GO train service between Toronto and Waterloo, weekday GO service to Niagara Falls, and an extension to GO Transit's Lake Shore East rail corridor to Bowmanville.

We are investing in multiple rapid transit projects, including the Eglinton Crosstown LRT, Finch West LRT, Hamilton LRT, Hurontario LRT, the Scarborough subway extension, the Mississauga Transitway, the London BRT System, Ottawa's LRT, Waterloo's ION Rapid Transit, and the Line 1 Extension/Toronto-York Spadina Subway Extension.

We have also committed to providing the Province's share of funding for new projects such as the Toronto Relief Line Subway, the Yonge North Subway Extension, Toronto's Waterfront Transit Network, Durham BRT, and rapid transit in Mississauga and Brampton.

In addition, the Province is proceeding with an initial investment of over \$11 billion to build Canada's first high-speed rail line between Toronto and Windsor. Beginning with service from Toronto to London, high speed rail will cut travel times, reduce congestion on our highways, fight climate change, and create new opportunities for workers, businesses and families.

Our recent commitment to reducing the cost of transit in the GTHA by furthering the integration of fares across multiple transit service providers will save people money, increase transit ridership and reduce congestion on our roads. All GO Transit rides within Toronto will cost PRESTO card users just \$3, any trip under 10km anywhere on the GO network will cost just \$3, and \$1.50 per trip discounts will be introduced for transit users who transfer between the TTC and the GO network, York Region Transit, Mississauga's MiWay, Brampton Transit or Durham Region Transit.

We are also committed to enhancing active transportation options. Building on an initial investment of \$94M, which supported 118 municipalities to build bike lanes and bike parking, we have committed \$140M more in carbon market proceeds to continue this progress as well as invest in “first mile / last mile” transit solutions to make it easier for people to get to and from transit stations.