

# Ontario New Democrats POLICIES FOR TODAY

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*The* EDITH *and* LORNE PIERCE  
COLLECTION *of* CANADIANA



*Queen's University at Kingston*

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## Policies for Today

Ontario New Democrats have called this booklet "Policies for Today" for several reasons.

The policies here for your consideration are the issues that we believe are most urgent. The policies are practical. They are not flights of fancy for a rainbow studded never-never land. We know they work because most of them are already at work in other Canadian provinces.

But most importantly, we have chosen "Policies for Today" because for too long the Ontario Government has put people off until tomorrow.

Tomorrow is already too late for the family without adequate shelter at a reasonable cost.

Tomorrow is too late to protect our non-renewable resources for future generations.

Tomorrow is too late to protect valuable farmland that has already been built over with shopping centres.

Tomorrow is too late for environmental impact legislation, a Prices Review Board to protect the consumers, a viable energy policy, a Rental Review Board . . .

Tomorrow is too late for the wife and children of a uranium miner who died because of unsafe working conditions.

The people of Ontario have run out of government tomorrows. For Ontario New Democrats – tomorrow starts today.

## Housing: The cost of a roof.

Because of almost total reliance on the private sector to build houses in Ontario, housing starts are falling behind housing needs at a rate of over 40,000 units a year. Extreme cost increases have made renting a burden and put home ownership beyond the reach of middle-income families.

New Democrats believe that everyone in Ontario has a right to decent housing at a reasonable cost. No one should have to pay more than 25% of their gross income on housing.

To end the housing crisis and establish housing as a social right, the NDP would implement a programme to build the units we need today. The implementation of this programme would require a significant increase in the public role in housing development.

The Home Ownership Programme, which has demonstrated that housing can be provided for under \$25,000, would become a major supplier in the housing market.

Public corporations would develop rental housing – not only to wipe out the waiting lists for subsidized family and senior citizen housing – but also to provide reasonably-priced housing for middle-income earners who are currently being priced out of the rental market.

Co-operative and non-profit housing would be given increased assistance as alternatives to the traditional private and public housing sectors.

With mortgage rates now above 12%, home ownership is not feasible for most families. New Democrats would provide mortgages to low and moderate income families at below market rates through the Province of Ontario Savings Office. Low income families would pay only 6%, moderate income families an average of 8%. This would be achieved by use of an interest rate tax credit.

Rehabilitation assistance funding would be increased to improve the quality of the existing housing stock.

To ensure adequate supplies of housing at reasonable cost in the future, the NDP would maintain land banks large enough to satisfy ten years' housing demand around every urban area in the province. This land would not be sold at market prices, as is now the case with government land banks, but would be retained in public ownership and leased as it is developed. Each year, enough housing would be developed from the bank to satisfy current needs. This would ensure both an adequate housing supply and reduce the effect that high land costs now have on housing prices.

## Being a tenant.

The inadequate supply of shelter in Ontario has not only driven single family housing beyond the reach of most families, it has resulted in rapidly rising rents. More than 40 percent of Ontario households now rent their accommodation and,

in the past year, most of their rents have risen dramatically.

Where requested by a local municipality, an Ontario NDP government would implement a system of rent controls that would prohibit unjustified rental increases while ensuring that the landlord received a fair return on his investment.

Such a system would be implemented for a defined period of time or until the housing supply caught up with demand. Tenants would be protected against arbitrary and excessive rent increases.

A Rental Review Board would determine a rate fair to both tenant and landlord. This Rental Review Board would remain after any controls were removed to protect tenants from unjustified rent increases in the future. A tenants' bill of rights would give tenants the right to renew leases unless cause for refusal could be shown.

Tenants would have the right to participate in the management of publicly owned and non-profit housing and legislation would be enacted to encourage similar participation in privately-owned buildings.

## To your good health: Health and Social Services

Health care costs the people of Ontario almost three billion dollars per year, more than \$300 for every man, woman, and child. Although the existence of government-operated health insurance means that everyone can pay medical and hospital bills in time of illness, it is clear that there are still serious problems in the availability of health and social services in Ontario.

The NDP would make sure that every person in the province had access to a full range of services. In many areas, this would be done by establishing a Community Health and Social Services Centre to complement the local hospital. Medical services available at a Centre would include those of family doctors, pediatricians, nurses, dentists, mental health counsellors, pharmacists, lab technicians, and others. These health personnel would receive a basic salary supplemented by fee for service. This system would help to stabilize the overall amount of money spent on medical care.

Since social factors such as poverty, stress, and working conditions also cause physical disorders, preventive social services would also be available at a Centre. These might include social workers, industrial health programmes, child care facilities, legal aid services, welfare offices, and so on.

This central feature of NDP health policy is supported by a number of other programmes including:

- mobile medical and dental teams for remote rural areas;
- free dental care for children;
- increased use of paramedical personnel;
- prenatal classes and diet supplements for pregnant women;
- financing of health programmes by progressive income tax, and gradual abolition of premiums;
- strict enforcement of industrial health and safety standards.

## Education: Improving the quality.

In the last decade, concern for education has been reduced to a matter of dollars, numbers, and buildings. As people have become more distant from what is happening inside Ontario's classrooms, parents have become confused, teachers frustrated, and students disillusioned.

Our concern now must be with the quality of education.

Financial priorities must reflect increased emphasis on the learning conditions of young children in order to provide personalized attention, smaller classes and a more stimulating learning environment. A revitalized elementary



school system would make it possible to diagnose and treat learning disabilities at an early age, and to ensure that children absorb the basic skills they need to function in our society.

The NDP believes that the provincial government should be supporting a wide variety of educational programmes, from voluntary early childhood education to adult programmes; from composite schools to apprenticeship systems; from community-initiated learning projects to universities.

The NDP believes that more control of education should be put back into the hands of the community. Each school should be governed by a school council, composed of teacher, parent and student representatives. Each school council would be responsible to an elected Community Council having jurisdiction over several schools in an area which might be the size of a municipal ward. The provincial Ministry of Education would provide funding, conduct research, and develop curriculum materials free from sex, ethnic and anti-labour bias, but programmes for specific institutions would be designed locally to meet community needs.

To provide the best possible education for Ontario students, educational financing must be reorganized. The NDP would gradually decrease the education portion of the municipal property tax dollar, replacing it with funds from the more progressive provincial income tax. In addition, the current spending ceilings would be adjusted to provide for innovative programmes and to aid less privileged communities.

## Day Care: Who looks after the pre-schoolers?

Ontario New Democrats believe that day care is as much a public responsibility and as important to the child's development as the education of older children. Day care allows both the child and parent a wider range of opportunities and experiences.

But in 1975 in Ontario, there are only about 40,000 spaces for children under the age of ten. The estimated minimum needed is 300,000 spaces. The Ontario New Democrats are committed to meeting this critical need. Day care should be both available and accessible to the people who need it. This means more part-time day care before and after school, lunch hours and Saturdays. It also means more nursery schools and more family day care in private homes. Day care must also be available around the clock for the children of shift workers. Day care should be available whenever it is needed and not just in major urban centres.

Ontario New Democrats believe that day care should be available to any family which has a need for it, regardless of its financial situation. If that requires major government initiatives, no social cost can be more legitimate. Both the

parents and the surrounding community should have a say and participate in the running of the centre.

Ontario New Democrats believe that child care workers must be well qualified and well paid and that existing regulations concerning child-staff ratios, child-space ratios, fire safety, and kitchen standards should be considered the minimum necessary.

## Working Conditions: A fairer deal.

Currently, 95 percent of all collective bargaining agreements are settled without strikes across the bargaining table. The remaining five percent continue to harass all of us more and more.

While Ontario New Democrats recognize that labour relations are frequently an arduous process, it is also true that labour relations are ultimately human relations. In Ontario, labour relations generally have worked well in the past and with fresh initiative by the provincial government, much of the labour management ills that affect us now could be cured.

Many of the current problems that beset Ontario lie in the failure of the present government to enforce the good faith bargaining clause already enshrined in the Ontario Labour Relations Act. This failure has resulted in bad faith bargaining highlighted by unrealistic proposals and counter proposals that end in work stoppages.

Labour-management confrontations in emerging public sector negotiations are cause for special concern. Again, it is the failure of the Department

of Labour to develop conciliators and arbitrators skilled in public sector bargaining that has resulted in a breakdown of negotiations.

An NDP government in Ontario would uphold the good faith bargaining clause and establish a team of government conciliation and mediation officers highly skilled and knowledgeable in public sector bargaining. An NDP government would provide every assistance, including up-to-date research data, for management and labour to reach an amicable settlement.

But the right of employees to go on strike, if they collectively voted to do so, is a right that would be upheld. Regulations dealing with certification of new union locals would be altered so that automatic certification would occur when there is evidence of majority support. Full union dues check-off would be mandatory with certification.

In an NDP Ontario, all employees except those considered absolutely essential to the preservation of society would have, if they chose, full and free collective bargaining rights. Police and firemen, considered so essential to society that the right to withdraw their labour collectively cannot apply, would have their wages and working conditions pegged to other salaried groups to ensure that they are rewarded effectively for the vital services they provide.

## Working Safely

A shocking lack of governmental concern for safe working places has already resulted in too many deaths and injuries to Ontario workers. As a result of a hard-working NDP caucus, reforms have been promised. For many families such reforms simply come too late. The callous government approach of counting the bodies afterward must never be repeated.

Ontario needs a tough Occupational Health Act stringently enforced. Its focus would be on cleaning up the work place. New chemicals would be introduced only after thorough testing for health hazards is undertaken and exposure standards determined.

Employers would be required to establish a health and safety committee with equal representation from management and employees. This committee would have the right to monitor, identify and solve all health and safety problems at the place of work.

No employee would be penalized for refusing to work in an unsafe working area and all employees would have access to results of government monitoring. Regular independent health examinations would be required for any worker exposed to a hazard and all medical information would be available immediately to the employee.

Such steps would ensure that employees participate in the protection of their own health and safety.

## The cost of living

It is the responsibility of the province to help protect consumers from rising prices. An NDP government in Ontario would enact legislation enabling it to review the prices of important commodities and roll back increases when they were found to be unwarranted.

Oil company profits continue to be exorbitant at the expense of consumers. Ontario New Democrats would give the Ontario Energy Board power to scrutinize all proposed price increases before they go into effect.

Because of a shortage of adequate shelter, rents are increasing faster than the overall cost of living and much faster than weekly wages and salaries. This forces the 40 percent of Ontario families who rent to pay an increasing proportion of their income on housing.

Where it was requested by municipalities, an NDP government would introduce a rent control programme to halt wildly escalating rents until the supply of adequate housing improves. Such a rent control programme would provide for a fair return on investment for landlords, incentives to increase supply and a rent review board to settle disputes.



Automobile owners in Ontario pay some of the highest rates in the country for car insurance. An NDP government in Ontario would provide no fault public automobile insurance resulting in lower operating costs and lower premiums.

## Transportation: Movement for development

The convenient and low cost movement of people and products is vital. In a province as vast as Ontario, no single transportation system can accommodate the various needs of industry and people in the north, in the cities, and in the rural areas. An integrated system must be tailored to meet the unique needs of each sector.

The development of secondary industry in Ontario requires the development of a transportation system capable of moving goods cheaply to markets. Discriminatory freight rates that discourage northern development by encouraging the outflow of unprocessed ores must be overhauled. Northern roads must be brought up to southern standards for the benefit of both industry and residents. Efforts to improve air and rail access to what are now considered remote areas must be stepped up.

A realistic and equitable urban transportation system must assign equal importance to the diverse needs of suburb and city core. The NDP would encourage the use of mass transit for commuting into the downtown areas and upgrade suburban public transit systems. The

need for a balance between buses, streetcars, light rapid transit, and the private automobile has long been a recognized goal of an NDP transportation policy.

## Agriculture: The fat of the land

These are lean times for Ontario's farm community. Every hour of every day 26 acres of farmland go out of production. In the past decade, Ontario's farm population has declined by almost 40 percent. Aging farmers are no longer being replaced by the young.

The NDP is determined to reverse these trends – determined to treat agriculture as the important resource industry which it is. The first step in stabilizing farming must be to halt the disastrous depletion of farmland. NDP land-use planning would ensure that land suitable for agriculture is protected. Because the farm community should not be expected to bear the full cost of preserving land for agriculture, consideration would be given to compensating farmers for expectations lost.

Hand in hand with the erosion of farm land has gone the erosion of farm incomes.

Established farmers are leaving the land because they no longer can make a decent living. Similarly, young people are discouraged from entering the profession.

To encourage preservation of the family farm, farm families must be guaranteed sufficient income to meet the costs of production and ensure adequate returns for labour and investment.

Orderly marketing systems should be able to provide sufficient returns to keep the farmer in business. However, when prices fail to do so, an income support insurance plan, contributed to by both farmers and government, would make up the difference. Specific NDP programmes to foster, protect and develop the rural lifestyle would be developed in conjunction with representative farm people.

## Environment

As society continues to grow and produce, pollution in all forms is increasing at a rapid rate.

Environmental protection is ultimately involved with the process of growth in Ontario society. It is the belief of the Ontario NDP that both public and private sector should be carefully involved in the environmental planning process.

Central to such a process would be a mandatory assessment of potential environmental impact of all projects likely to affect our environment. An independent hearing board holding full public hearings would review and analyse proposed projects for their impact on environment. The decision of such a board would be final and binding but could be appealed through regular courts of law.

The commitment of Ontario New Democrats to full public review of proposed projects includes a review of projects already under way including

the Arnprior Dam, Cedar Wood and Maple Mountain.

An NDP government in Ontario would act quickly to eliminate some of the more obvious sources of pollution. A programme to eliminate non-refillable soft drink containers over a defined period would be instituted at once. A Products Review Board would be established to examine all products and packages now on the market as well as new designs and judge them according to durability, reusability, recyclability and other environmental criteria.

Water and air quality standards would be tightened, monitored and enforced. An NDP government would actively encourage construction of recycling plants through tax incentives and a preferential purchasing policy for products manufactured from recycled materials. The NDP would not tolerate continued development of landfill sites. Taxes from motor-boat gasoline would be directed to help fund the clean-up of many lakes, rivers and streams throughout Ontario.

## Energy: Making it go a long way

Ontario's energy policies are a hodge-podge. Hydro builds an unnecessary multi-billion dollar empire. The Energy Board attempts to control natural gas prices at the retail level but has no control over wholesale prices. Imperial Oil and the other giants control marketing and set prices independent of any government review and laugh all the way to their American banks.

No ministry seems to be caring or doing anything about energy conservation.

NDP energy policy is based on the need for conservation and efficient use of energy to ensure adequate and affordable supplies for present and future generations while protecting the environment in the process.

An Ontario NDP government would establish an energy marketing board to handle the purchase of all energy supplies from outside Ontario and to help control prices within Ontario. Such a board would make Ontario both less vulnerable to outside price changes and enhance the province's bargaining power in energy negotiations with other jurisdictions.

The Ontario Energy Board would be empowered to review price increases on gasoline and home fuel oil and recommend roll backs when such increases were unjustified.

An NDP Energy Ministry would take full responsibility for planning energy use. Energy decisions would be made for public benefit – lower prices, more secure supplies, regional development – rather than private profits.

Ontario Hydro's growth rate would be reduced. All of Ontario Hydro's intentions, from planned transmission corridors to nuclear installations, would be subject to the most rigid scrutiny in the form of public hearings where citizens' groups would be encouraged to participate.

## Resources: Our natural wealth

One of the basic principles of the Canadian constitution is that natural resources belong to the provinces. As well as generating vast amounts of wealth, resources are basic to the industrial development of Ontario. But because most of the wealth finds its way into private profits, resource development has been determined by corporate rather than public interests.

New Democratic policy is to turn the principle of provincial resource ownership into fact. In the case of minerals, we would acquire ownership of all mineral rights and ore reserves. Current mining operations would continue on a public utility basis – under public regulation and with a royalty on the ore large enough to eliminate excessive profits on extraction and processing.

New resource development would be carried out by Crown Corporations. New processing facilities would be public or joint public-private ventures.

With careful management, forest resources, unlike mineral resources, are renewable. But we must ensure that forests are given the chance to grow. Therefore, the Ontario New Democrats would negotiate the termination of existing rights and leases. Processing would be done either by existing operators or by Crown Corporations as circumstances dictate.

The exploitation of our mineral and forest resources must be carefully planned so that they are used to the best advantage of all Ontario residents.

## How land is used

Land is a non-renewable resource. Yet it has been treated by the Ontario government as a limitless commodity to be auctioned to the highest bidder. As a result of such short sighted policies, some of our finest agricultural land has passed into the hands of speculators. This has meant that unique topographical features like the Niagara Escarpment have been disfigured by residential, commercial and industrial development. The goals of an NDP government would be to ensure that our needs for food, minerals, timber, housing and recreational pursuits are in harmony with one another.

In consultation with local communities, the NDP would develop a provincial land-use strategy which would assign development priorities to various classes of land. The Canada Land Inventory Maps, supplemented by local surveys, can provide authoritative guides for land-use decisions.

Each "class" of land is suited to different uses. Classes one, two and three should be used in the production of crops. Timber could be harvested on classes four, five, and six, while housing developments should be contained on class seven or scrub land.

In some instances multiple uses are both possible and desirable. Ontario has sufficient land resources for all its needs. Ontario New Democrats want to see them husbanded wisely in the interests of our children.

## Regional Government: The solution that became a problem

Regional government was established to make local government more effective – to attack problems of cost, efficiency, and planning in traditional local governments. Regional government has not succeeded in solving these problems. In fact, it has created other problems – duplication of services, limited government access, and government red tape.

The New Democratic approach to local government emphasizes flexibility towards government structures in recognition of the diverse needs of Ontario communities.

The NDP would place an immediate moratorium on the creation of additional restructured governments until a thorough review of the financial and political problems of existing governments has been completed. It would enable any restructured government to review its own functioning at regular intervals and make necessary changes.

Local government reform would proceed only with local initiative and direction. Innovative solutions like community councils would be encouraged.

But the NDP would also recognize that many local government problems can never be solved by any kind of restructuring. Municipal financial problems would be eased by implementing a Municipal Foundation Plan to guarantee minimum service levels across the province. Part of Ontario's income tax revenue must be set aside for municipal finance.

Local planning would be made more effective by developing a provincial economic plan – a plan which would provide a context within which local plans could operate.

## Regional Disparities

For far too long, the region centred around Toronto has been the focus for economic development and industrial growth in Ontario. As a result, other areas of the province have suffered from inadequate housing, poor roads, insufficient jobs and a lower standard of community services.

Ontario New Democrats believe that all regions of the province are entitled to a fair share of Ontario's abundance. In consultation with municipalities, the public and the business community, an Ontario NDP government would develop an overall growth strategy for the province.

Industries would be encouraged – at times directed – to locate in less developed areas. To effect appropriate industrial location, the NDP would choose from amongst economic tools used in Canadian, American and European jurisdictions.

To implement its "fair share" policy, the Ontario NDP would increase the availability of mortgage funds and release additional dollars for community rehabilitation. Road improvement programmes and adequate water and sewage systems would be accelerated. A major effort would be undertaken to attract highly skilled personnel to these areas.

By implementing such policies, urban sprawl, including the almost mindless destruction of so much of our valuable farmland would be slowed dramatically. These policies would also bring some relief to those

Metro-area communities suffering from excessive growth rates and accompanying social and environmental ills.





Tomorrow  
starts  
today



Ontario New Democrats NDP

