

Ontario Environmental Priorities Election Questionnaire

Canadian Physicians for the Environment | Citizens Environment Alliance | Canadian Environmental Law Association | CPAWS Wildlands League | David Suzuki Foundation | Earthroots | Ecojustice | Environment North | Environmental Defence | Ontario Nature | Greenpeace | LEAF | Local Food Plus | Ontario Clean Air Alliance | Ontario Sustainable Energy Association | Pembina Institute | Sierra Club Ontario | Toronto Environmental Alliance | Sustain Ontario | Wildlife Preservation Canada

The following policy questionnaire is being submitted on behalf of the Ontario Priorities Initiative, a joint undertaking of 20 of Ontario's leading environmental organizations. These questions are based on a set of joint policy priorities developed by our organizations and available at GreenProsperity.ca. We believe that a healthy environment is the cornerstone of a strong economy and a high quality of life for all Ontarians. We look forward to receiving your party's responses on these critical issues.

Please return completed questionnaire to Brad Cundiff – brad@glcommunications.ca Any questions or requests for clarifications can also be directed to Brad at 416-535-0205.

Will your party commit to improving public transit by:

- **Investing in immediate service improvements and bring provincial funding for operations back to 50% of costs?**

The Green Party of Ontario (GPO) will 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.

- **Fully integrating transit and urban planning to ensure strong transit connections within and between communities across Ontario, including using development charges to fund transit expansion?**

Yes. The GPO will concentrate on improved planning and development strategies. Using powers

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of zoning, we can design communities that are safe and convenient, while reducing air pollution and facilitating activity that keeps us healthy.

The Green Party supports the purpose of gas tax transfers in encouraging municipalities to develop and enhance public transit systems. We can improve the program by enabling municipalities to pool resources and accumulate funds for major new transit options. This may help rural municipalities test the feasibility of a town-to-town public transit system.

The Green Party would help municipalities invest in sensible transportation solutions improve the economy, our personal finance, and the health and well-being of all Ontarians.

Will your party act to protect the natural biodiversity of our province by:

• **Repealing exemptions to the Endangered Species Act?**

Yes. Endangered species are not luxuries. By the Ministry of the Environment's own estimations, Ontario's ecosystems provide \$84 billion a year worth of services. Endangered species live in habitats that help clean the air and water, provide us with food and fuel, and offer us great opportunities for recreation. We can't afford to lose them.

At the same time, the Liberal government has made it a lot easier to destroy priceless habitats, and to kill, harm and harass endangered species. Behind closed doors, Kathleen Wynne's cabinet added a raft of exemptions to the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The Liberals have put the profits of developers, gravel pit owners, and mining companies ahead of the places we love and the lives of the creatures with whom we share Ontario.

The Green Party of Ontario is the only provincial party to object to the changes to the ESA. We're also alone in standing up against the aggregate industry and demanding a stronger Aggregate Resources Act. And we are the only party to have signed the Food and Water First Pledge. We will commit ourselves to renewing the Endangered Species Act and to reversing the exemptions that have recently been made by the Liberal government.

• **Meeting the 2020 target date for protecting 17% of Southern Ontario's land base through protected areas and conservation stewardship arrangements as called for in the province's Biodiversity Strategy?**

Yes. The GPO is committed to protecting and encouraging more biodiversity in Ontario. The GPO is calling for the implementation of financially responsible solutions to protect our biodiversity:

- *restricting development on environmentally sensitive land*
- *providing incentives for land owners to promote biodiversity on their property*



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PO Box 1132 Station F Toronto, ON M4Y 2T8

•providing “safe

harbour” protections for land owners with endangered species on their property

•working with stakeholders to develop containment strategies to prevent the spread of invasive species

Will your party help to reduce energy costs by:

• **Closing the high-cost and risky Pickering Nuclear Station by 2015 and requiring a full review of the cost of nuclear refurbishment projects by the province’s new Financial Accountability Office or the Ontario Energy Board?**

The Green Party of Ontario (GPO) opposes any future funding and development of conventional nuclear power plants. Nuclear is an inflexible source of base-load power that removes incentives for conservation, efficiency, or more affordable and flexible sources of power. Accidents that happen in the production of nuclear power are catastrophic and are happening around the world about once per decade. Moreover, nuclear energy production poses many risks for the environment and ecosystems including the emission of greenhouse gases, the consumption of large amounts of water and aggregates, and the warming of water – dangerous to aquatic life - due to waste heat. There are also significant financial burdens associated with the development of nuclear energy. No nuclear energy project in Ontario’s history has been completed on time or on budget. The cost overruns on these projects have been an astonishing 40% to 250%.

In the next decade hundreds of stations across the province will become unviable both economically and with respect to efficiency and safety. They will need to be decommissioned. The GPO will ensure that Ontario nuclear workers are leaders in decommissioning nuclear plants. In effect, the decommissioning will create well-paying jobs for Ontarians.

• **Fully implement the province’s new Conservation Framework to help homeowners and businesses save money by improving energy efficiency?**

Yes. The GPO believes in taking a conservation-first approach to Ontario’s energy strategy. We can cut home energy costs even as energy prices rise. It’s not magic: it’s conservation. Political games like hydro rebate gimmicks won’t work and they waste money.

Investments in conservation do work. They put money in your pocket and increase the value of homes. They create jobs and reduce pollution. These jobs are not only in construction and trades, but also in cleantech innovation and manufacturing, which is presently worth \$3 trillion and is expected to double in the next decade.

Best of all, the cost of owning or renting a home will go down. Cutting your energy bills by 50% would save the average household about \$1000 a year.

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The GPO will call for legislation providing grants up to \$4,000 for one million homeowners in Ontario to invest in energy conservation. We will also propose legislation requiring local utilities to provide affordable loans for you to retrofit your home.

Cancelling the refurbishment of expensive nuclear plants and purchasing low cost hydroelectricity will save Ontario \$1 billion per year. \$4 billion invested in energy conservation over four years will create at least 56,000 jobs.

Will your party help to address the climate change crisis that is leading to higher and higher costs due to extreme weather by:

- **Developing a carbon pricing system for large carbon emitters?**

Yes.

- **Enhance and procure living green infrastructure, like urban forests and green roofs that reduce flooding, provide natural cooling and increase climate resilience.**

Yes. The Green Party of Ontario supports a Green Infrastructure Strategy to help municipalities build strong, safe communities. We will focus on investments that lower stress on our infrastructure, save us money and improve quality of life.

Will you stop costly urban sprawl and create more liveable communities by:

- **Amending the *Development Charges Act, 1997* to ensure that new development pays the full cost of growth. These changes must include ending counterproductive discounts and exemptions from municipal service charges, and reflect future demands for increased services -- from schools to libraries -- through full lifecycle costing.**

One of the major challenges in our current economic climate is building diverse, resilient local economies. We are committed to working with municipalities on developing sensible, long-term solutions to the challenges our communities face.

*The GPO will support a review of the *Development Charges Act* so that growth pays for itself without unsustainable burdens on property taxpayers.*

- **Rewarding developers through development charge discounts when they increase density, create infill development, build energy and water efficient developments, and accommodate urban agriculture, community gardens and food retailers?**

Yes. The GPO believes in working with developers to create sustainable and livable communities. We have long advocated for this co-operative approach with private builders, especially in our policies on social housing.

Will you ensure resource development in the Ring of Fire does not irreparably damage one of the world's most important natural areas by:

- **Establishing a Regional Strategic Environmental Assessment Planning process to develop a “big picture” vision and community consensus around the future of the region rather than relying on fragmented and largely uncoordinated conventional planning approaches?**

Yes. The GPO believes that we must study carefully the health and environmental impacts of any development and be transparent about them. The government's job is to ensure that the development and extraction of natural resources benefits all Ontarians and First Nations.

We believe that we must address three key issues before beginning development on any site in Ontario, including the Ring of Fire: 1) We will implement a Sustainable Development Plan that maximizes economic benefits while protecting health and the environment; 2) We will engage First Nations in the decision making process in order to acquire their consent and partnership in development; 3) We will ensure that all value-added processing is done in local communities.

The GPO will ensure that all development of Ontario's land and natural resources is done in a fiscally and environmentally responsible manner that takes into account First Nations interests.

- **Create a coordinated infrastructure plan that protects the ecological integrity of the region rather than building roads and transmission lines in response to individual project demands?**

Yes. See above.

Will you act to stop the alarming decline of critical plant pollinators, particularly bees, by:

- **Restricting the sale and commercial use of neonicotinoids and ban neonicotinoid seed treatments through changes to the Tables in sections 4 and 98 of Ontario Regulation 6/09 of the Ontario *Pesticides Act*?**

Yes. The Green Party of Ontario will support a ban on the sale and commercial use of neonicotinoids and neonicotinoid-treated seeds. We have repeatedly called on the government to ban the use of neonicotinoid pesticides that scientists have blamed for colony collapse, until peer-reviewed scientific research can prove otherwise. We will continue to advocate for this ban whether elected or not.



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PO Box 1132 Station F Toronto, ON M4Y 2T8

· **Investing in the protection and restoration of habitats for pollinators, which contribute hundreds of millions of dollars in pollination services to Ontario each year.**

The GPO recognizes that the decline of the insect pollinator population is an urgent environmental problem with even more widespread ramifications. Insect pollinators are integral to our global food system and the global and local economies cannot function without them. We firmly believe that the provincial and federal governments should not put our food supply and our local economy at risk by failing to protect insect pollinators.

We have encouraged the government of Canada to support research on the decline of bee populations. If elected, we would further invest in studies on pollinator-friendly farming techniques and the protection and restoration of pollinator habitats. We continue to believe that is essential that we have a thorough understanding of what is causing the decline of bee populations.

Will your party address rising cancer rates by:

- **Requiring labelling on products that contain carcinogens, with requirements for listing and labelling based on evidence from internationally recognized health authorities, such as Health Canada or the International Agency for Research on Cancer?**

Cancer is agonizing for families and it takes a huge toll on our health care system and economy. The Green Party of Ontario will take the fight to cancer through a plan focusing on promoting health. We support labelling household products that contain carcinogens with a clearly recognizable symbol similar to corrosive, flammable and poisonous.

- **Closing the "fragrance" loophole by requiring full ingredient disclosure for cosmetics rather than allowing broad category descriptions such as "fragrance"?**

Yes.

Will your party act quickly to reintroduce legislation based on these bills that were left unfinished by the election call: (please indicate which you support):

- **Bill 6, Great Lakes Protection Act**
- **Bill 83, Protection of Public Participation Act**
- **Bill 91, Waste Reduction Act**
- **Bill 138, Ending Coal for Cleaner Air Act**
- **Bill 167, Invasive Species Act**

Yes. The GPO supports all of these bills and would act to reintroduce legislation based on them.

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