

Province-Wide Parties Debate on Accessibility and Disability Issues – May 16, 2018

Partners: Organized by strong partnership comprised of non-partisan, cross-disability, community organization and office at Ryerson University, the Ryerson student union and Ryerson School of disability studies.

Purpose: Purpose of this debate is for Ontarians with disabilities and their allies to ask questions to the provincial party about party platform, commitments, programs and policies on accessibility and disability issues, so that we can make informed choices on June 7th, 2018 Ontario provincial elections.

Participants:

Ontario New Democratic Party: Monique Taylor (Representing Hamilton-Mountain) – NDP Critic for Persons with Disability and Accessibility

Ontario Liberal Party: Damin Starr (Representing Hamilton –Mountain)

Ontario PC Party: Christine Elliot (Representing Newmarket – Aurora)

Green Party of Ontario: Mike Schreiner (Representing the region of Guelf)

General Question: What are your official party platform commitments, programs, initiatives, and policies on accessibility and disability issues for the 2018 election campaign?

Key Comments from Ontario NDP

- People facing lack of access to general services, which means barriers in all corners of life. Barriers to education, public service, and barriers to participation in all forms of public and private life.
- These barriers are not right and not fair and come at a cost of 25 billion dollars annually
- 60% Of businesses in Toronto have yet to file accessibility reports required by AODA
- PCs have no plan for those living with disabilities
- PCs have vowed to cut 6 billion dollars from people starved off public services

Key Comments from Ontario Liberal Party

- Liberal Party Was The Governing Party overlooking THE Passage Of The AODA IN 2005
- Liberal government started da new chapter for adopted a new inclusive and community based living model and closed the previous institutionalized one
- Liberals are dedicating monies to the accessibility programs and services in their 2018 budget which includes fully costed enactments for developmental services, ODSP, Mental Health and Ontario's Autism program

Key Comments from Ontario PC Party

- Thousands of people wait for years to move into subsidized and supportive housing and end up paying market rental rates –leaving little for food necessities on ODSP Budget.
- Ensuring that Ontario is on track for becoming a fully inclusive and accessible province by 2025 will be a priority for PC Government
- PC government is committed to developing a gold standard for accessibility and inclusion for Ontario and the rest of Canada and the world

Key Comments from Ontario Green Party:

- we have put forward a vision book which includes a historic commitment to bring forward a basic income guarantee in Ontario
- we have an affordable housing strategy to increase the availability of affordable housing supply, increase funding for supported housing, co-op housing and social housing
- we believe deeply in affordable, accessible, barrier- free transit with historic investment in expanding out Ontario Infrastructure and help cover operating cost for municipalities to create more affordable transit.

Major Themes Relevant to SCI Ontario Platform:

- Accessible, subsidized and supportive housing
- Ontario disability support program (ODSP)
- AODA

Political Party Candidate Commitments

Accessible, Subsidized and Supportive Housing:

Question # 1: With the urgent housing crisis, what is your party's commitment to short-term and long term investment strategies in the following four areas: (1) Low cost housing (2) social housing (3) accessible subsidized housing (4) supportive housing using universal design principles?

NDP Commitment:

- NDP is committed, in the first term of its mandate, to 12,000 new homes, or 30,000 within 10 years with 1.4 billion dollar investment
- NDP will also add 65,000 affordable housing units over 10 years with support from not-for-profits and co-ops.

Liberal Party Commitment:

- Every year, the Liberal government invests 1 billion dollars per year on housing. We know it's not enough.
- In the short term, over the next five years, the liberals will be committing an additional 600 million dollars to support social housing, repair and retrofit
- OLP is also negotiating a new deal with the Federal Liberals on a new national housing strategy, including building new affordable housing

Ontario PC Commitment:

- In the short-term PC party will maintain the status quo on rent control and not change it. In the longer –term we would engage in discussions with builders about how to bring forward new options and more accessible housing
- We also need to be more innovative in developing new approaches to change how people re currently housed.

Green Party Commitment:

- Green party has a three part plan – first, we will increase for supportive and social housing additional \$200 million to ramp up the supply of affordable housing
- We will also require developers to have a minimum of 20% below market housing availability that would ramp up the supply
- We need to be innovative with housing such as tiny housing and other forms to utilize existing building stock more efficiently.

Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP)

Question#2: Moving to the standard flat rate recommended in Income Security Roadmap For Change would ensure everybody gets the full benefit amount and will eliminate reporting rules. Will your party implement the recommendation? If yes, then how and when? If not, why?

Green Party Commitment:

- We would absolutely implement the recommendations to end the red tape and the undignified ways in which we force people to apply for support programs
- We will move to a basic income guarantee program with no forms attached

PC Party Commitment:

- We will review and consider in detail the benefits and potential detriments of the standard flat rate recommended by the Income Security Roadmap for Change.
- With respect to ODSP, we will consult with people with disabilities to determine what changes would be of greatest benefit.

Liberal Party Commitment:

- The Ontario Liberal party supports the proposed recommendations. We want to include the rate increase of 3% and changes to the income exemptions and benefits including removing barriers.
- These are our commitments today and over the coming years

NDP Commitment:

- We fully endorse the Income Security Roadmap and the standard flat rate and ensure that procedures are in place to make it less onerous for people to apply for ODSP

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act - AODA

Question#3: How will your party ensure AODA Compliance and a higher level of accountability for the for-profit sector? Please give specific examples.

NDP Commitment:

- We will explore options to increase enforcement of AODA, including increasing the number of inspectors and certifying inspectors from other agencies to enforce the AODA compliance
- We will commit to publicizing ways for the public and public servants to report to the AODA

Liberal Party Commitment:

- We have tried pilot projects where we have trained auditors from other ministries to identify AODA compliance issues and we will continue to build on that initiative.
- We are committed to building education and awareness around the need for integrated workplaces that accommodate and appreciate employees regardless of disability challenges

PC Party Commitment:

- We fully support the AODA and achieving full accessibility by 2025. To reach this goal, we will develop an action plan to make sure we can achieve accessibility by 2025
- We will ensure that detailed technical accessibility advice is provided to all organizations who want to be accessible
- We will ensure that design professionals providing such advice are properly qualified and accountable to design principles.

Green Party Commitment:

- We will support an independent review of current standards and future standards with a plan on how Ontario is going to achieve our AODA goals by 2025
- We will have supports in place for the private sector to access the accessibility design guidelines

For more information please visit [link](#)