

Working for

you. Working

for the North.

The Ontario NDP's Northern platform

NDP  **NPD**

ANDREA

HORWATH

Introduction	2
Health Care	3
Mental Health and Addiction	4
Making Life Affordable	5
Safer Roads	5
Good jobs in the North	6
Ring of Fire	7
Education and defending Francophone culture	8
Indigenous Peoples	9
Rail and Transit	10
Environment	10

INTRODUCTION

As costs rise, families in Northern Ontario pay a heavier price. The cost of groceries is even more expensive in fly-in communities and Northerners must spend more money to travel greater distances, only to get underfunded services that keep getting cut.

Our health care system had long been struggling even before the pandemic, and Liberal and Conservative governments have ignored the opioid overdose crisis that has devastated Northern communities. Franco-Ontarians still struggle to get essential services such as health care in their own language, and one of Doug Ford's first actions in government was announcing cuts to French education. His government stood by following Laurentian University's mismanagement and students had their programs cancelled on them.

Liberal leader Steven Del Duca was part of the Liberal government who shut down the Northlander, breaking connections to the North. Doug Ford also broke his promise to bring the Northlander back during his first term. As Transport Minister, Del Duca let highway maintenance expenses get worse in the North, and refused to apologize for making families less safe on our roads.

The choices made by Liberal and Conservative governments have only made life more expensive. We're paying more, but we're getting less services.

It doesn't have to be this way, it's time we have a government that listens to and respects the North. Only Andrea Horwath and an NDP government will fix decades of cuts that broke our health care system and cut services leading to Ontarians paying more out of pocket. We will hire more doctors, build affordable housing, make our highways safe and connect our communities.

**By working closely with communities,
we have put together a plan that
puts the North ahead.**



HEALTH CARE

We know communities in the North are desperately short of health care professionals, and that it impacts people's access to health care. Far too many people are forced to travel extremely long distances to get the health care they need, and often it takes far too long for people to get the appointments that they require to have their health concerns addressed. In Thunder Bay, there are 19-hour waits in the emergency room before folks can be admitted to hospital; and an over 10 hours wait in Kenora, Dryden, and Greater Sudbury. In the North, overall, 300 doctors are needed: 100 family doctors, at least 40 more in urban settings, 160 specialists. These disparities facing Northerners are not new but COVID-19 has made things much, much worse. Dr. Adam Kassam, the president of the Ontario Medical Association, said this in regard to that work: "The Northern disparities in health care have existed for many years, but COVID-19 has made these gaps more visible and the need for solutions more urgent." This has to change.

Andrea Horwath and the NDP will fix this by:

- ➔ Working to end highway medicine. We'll immediately hire and recruit 300 doctors in Northern Ontario including 100 specialists and 40 mental health practitioners. We will work with the OMA and Northern communities to enhance incentives and supports for physicians and health care workers to practice in Northern Ontario and other communities that are chronically underserved. We will also work with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario to expedite the process for international medical graduates to obtain their license to work in Northern Ontario.
- ➔ Training more doctors and health professionals to work in the North by expanding the number of seats and training opportunities at NOSM University, funding travelling doctors to bring a resident with them when they go to a Northern Ontario community to practice, increasing student aid and introducing a special scholarship program for students from Northern Ontario who want to become health care practitioners. To recruit nurses to work in the North we will create rural nursing mentorships which will allow recent graduates to work with experienced nursing professionals in Northern communities.
- ➔ Ensuring that hospital funding grows to meet actual health care needs and making needed investments in new hospitals in communities like Sioux Lookout and funding expansion studies for Health Sciences North.



- ➔ Building new Community Health Centres in Kenora District, Cochrane District, and Algoma District (Sault Ste. Marie) that meet the unique needs of Indigenous, Francophone and underserved Northern communities, expanding primary health services with community-led Family Health Teams and other integrated health teams, and following guidance of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation Health Transformation Plan.
- ➔ Expanding access to midwifery care including in Francophone, rural and Indigenous communities and return a midwifery program to Sudbury to support Indigenous and Francophone midwives and families.
- ➔ Improving the Northern Health Travel Grant with a service guarantee, ensuring that Northern residents will not have to wait longer than 14 days when they incur travel expenses to get the care they need.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION

Ontario is facing both a mental health and an addiction crisis, and it is especially devastating in the North. The Canadian Mental Health Association reports that Northern Ontarians self-report higher rates of depression. The suicide rate among Indigenous youth is estimated to be six times higher than non-Indigenous populations. Ontario's chief coroner reports a rising number of opioid-related deaths in the North. For too long, governments have failed to act. Premier Doug Ford cut mental health care funding and refused to fully address the overdose and addiction crisis. We can't ignore it any longer.

The NDP will fix it by:

- ➔ Declaring the opioid crisis a public health emergency and expedite approvals for additional supervised consumption sites in the North.
- ➔ Funding a 24/7 mental health crisis centre in Thunder Bay, like the community has asked for, and ensure similar centres are built in Sioux Lookout and Sudbury.
- ➔ Building 3,600 new units of supportive housing in Northern Ontario and providing long-term funding for repairs on community housing units.
- ➔ Immediately investing in mobile crisis services and work towards establishing 24-hour civilian community mobile teams in communities across the North.
- ➔ Implementing Universal Mental Health Care, so people get counselling, therapy and intensive supports with their OHIP card, not their credit card. The plan includes training and hiring more mental health professionals specifically for the North.

MAKING LIFE AFFORDABLE

The cost of everyday life is climbing higher everywhere – but this has always been the case in Northern Ontario. Heating bills are higher in colder winters and Doug Ford broke his promise to Ontarians to lower hydro prices after Del Duca and his Liberals broke our hydro system. Travelling long distances makes the cost of driving that much more expensive. Groceries and other essentials cost more. Northerners deserve a real plan to make life affordable and help pay the bills.

The NDP will fix this by:

- ➔ Regulating gas prices to protect consumers: Direct the Ontario Energy Board to regulate gas prices.
- ➔ Building 6,000 units of new affordable housing in Northern Ontario and 3,600 units of supportive housing. For more on our housing plan see the NDP Homes You Can Afford Plan.
- ➔ Moving forward on an accessible, high-quality, \$10-a-day child care system that Northern families can depend on.
- ➔ Keeping electricity prices low by focusing on delivering power at cost instead of profit for private providers.

SAFER ROADS

Northern Ontarians rely on highways more than anywhere else in the province. Yet the conditions on roads are too often dangerous and unsafe. Year after year privatized winter road maintenance has left roads unsafe. Too many Northern Ontarians have lost their lives, or suffered life-altering injuries driving on poorly maintained routes in the winter. The North deserves better.

Andrea Horwath and the Ontario NDP will fix this by:

- ➔ Bringing winter road maintenance back in house.
- ➔ Declaring Highways 11/17 Class 1 Highways, requiring these to be cleared within eight hours of snowfall just like southern Ontario highways.
- ➔ Moving ahead with vital road construction projects like the four-laning of Highway 69 and Highway 11/17, and the Thunder Bay Expressway.

GOOD JOBS IN THE NORTH

Everyone in Ontario should have a good job that pays the bills and helps raise a family. Sadly, this isn't the case for many across Northern Ontario. Northern Ontario's resources have fueled Ontario's economic prosperity for generations, but the wealth generated has not always returned to the North. New and emerging industries have not received the support that they need, and too often decision-makers at Queen's Park just don't understand the unique needs of Northern Ontario's economy. Doug Ford has made things worse, from cancelling raises to the minimum wage, to quietly scrapping "Buy Ontario" domestic content rules that guarantee jobs in cities like Thunder Bay. Northern Ontario deserves better.

The NDP will fix this by:

- ➔ Working with industry partners and trades groups to promote and develop careers in the trades. We will bring more trades training to Northern Ontario communities, including community-run employment and training centres.
- ➔ Promoting film and television production to the North.
- ➔ Working with the mining sector to improve the regulatory regime and environmental standards.
- ➔ Creating education and career pathways to careers in mining, with postsecondary institutions and industry.
- ➔ Implementing our Ontario Forest Strategy.
- ➔ Increasing support for the Forest Access Roads Funding Program.
- ➔ Removing Doug Ford's secret cut to local content rules for transit projects and stop sending jobs overseas. We will ensure that public money is used in Ontario to create and protect good jobs.



- ➔ Making affordable high-speed internet available province wide. We will deliver province-wide high-speed internet across Ontario's North by or before 2025. We will target a broadband speed standard of 1 Gig symmetrical using future-proofed fibre technology, and ensure local small and medium-sized internet service providers can participate — not just large telecom monopolies. And unlike Doug Ford's Conservatives, we will ensure investment actually flows.
- ➔ Supporting Northern Ontario farmers by removing the cap on risk management programs, supporting supply management and working with farmers to improve transparency and fair dealings in the grocery industry.

RING OF FIRE

The Ontario NDP knows that the key to building a responsible, sustainable future for resource development in Ontario is consulting and working alongside First Nations, mining and exploration companies, refiners and Northerners. Developing the Ring of Fire is a tremendous opportunity if we get it right, and that means enacting our duty to consult with First Nations and engaging in sound environmental management.

The NDP will:

- ➔ Get the Ring of Fire project moving, the right way: with full transparency, community benefit agreements to guarantee jobs for Indigenous people, and proper environmental assessment. We'll progress in full partnership with First Nations.



EDUCATION AND DEFENDING FRANCOPHONE CULTURE

Children and young people in Northern Ontario need and deserve access to a world-class education. To get that done, decision-makers at Queen's Park need to understand the unique challenges facing Northern Ontario. Under the Liberals rural schools were closed without any concern for the communities affected. Under Doug Ford a Northern Ontario university applied for bankruptcy protection – the first time this has happened in history – leaving the North with a devastating loss of French programs and broken trust for teachers and potential students. Our kids deserve better.

New Democrats will fix this by:

- ➔ Doubling the Rural and Northern Education Fund.
- ➔ Ensuring strong Northern universities, and rebuilding the trust that was broken with Laurentian University.
- ➔ Investing to support a University of Sudbury that's by, with and for Francophones.
- ➔ Return a midwifery program to Sudbury to support Indigenous and Francophone midwives and families.
- ➔ Restoring the French Language Services Commissioner (FLSC) which was cut by Doug Ford and empower the FLSC to review government services according to the French Language Services Act, and take action where agencies fall short.
- ➔ Prioritize health care in French: ensuring the Health Ministry makes French language access a key part of its planning process while also increasing the number of community health centres, long-term care homes, mental health and addiction services by and for Francophones.



INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Again and again, the Conservatives and the Liberals play jurisdictional ping-pong — the federal government says it's a provincial responsibility and the province says it's a federal responsibility. While governments spend their time pointing fingers, it's the people on the ground who suffer. Lives are permanently scarred or lost by the lack of action. Instead of finger-pointing, we'll work collaboratively with First Nations to provide the necessary resources to fix critical basics like clean drinking water.

Andrea Horwath and the Ontario NDP will:

- ➔ Work with First Nations in Ontario in a true government-to-government relationship for community-led solutions for housing, health care and clean drinking water.
- ➔ Act on the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples on laws impacting Indigenous Peoples.
- ➔ Establish the Treaty Commission of Ontario, with a clear mandate to independently and impartially help settle land claims and assist negotiations between the governments of Ontario, Canada, and First Nations.
- ➔ Act immediately to end boil water advisories in Ontario, and work with the federal government to fund needed water infrastructure in First Nations communities.
- ➔ Support and work with First Nations who want to identify burial site locations of children at Indian Residential Schools.
- ➔ Act on the 231 Calls to Justice of the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and support First Nations-led approaches to eradicate gender-based violence and discrimination against First Nations women, youth, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.
- ➔ Justice for Grassy Narrows: We will clean up the mercury in the English-Wabigoon River system.
- ➔ Establish a provincial strategy to address the suicide crisis among First Nations youth.
- ➔ Work in partnership with Indigenous-led housing providers and the federal government and ensure an adequate supply of safe, affordable, culturally appropriate urban and rural housing as part of a for-Indigenous-by-Indigenous Housing strategy.
- ➔ Expand primary health care services to meet the unique needs of Indigenous people.
- ➔ Restore the Indigenous Culture Fund to strengthen opportunities for Indigenous artists.
- ➔ Provide flexible, equitable, and sustainable funding for First Nations mental health and addictions programs and services.

RAIL AND TRANSIT

It was the Liberal government who shut down the Northlander, further isolating communities in Northern Ontario. Northern communities are less connected than ever because Liberal and Conservative governments failed to react to the loss of Greyhound services. Doug Ford promised to restore it in 2018, but failed to deliver.

The NDP will fix the broken connections in the North by:

- ➔ Fully restoring the Northlander as part of our Northern Rail Strategy, and connecting it with the Polar Express in Cochrane.
- ➔ Supporting the Huron Central and Algoma Central Rail Lines.
- ➔ Working with municipal and industry partners to develop an Intercommunity Transportation Strategy to better connect communities across Ontario (after the end of Greyhound service in the North).

ENVIRONMENT

Every year that governments fail to act, the environment we've grown up in, and live in, is increasingly at risk. Northern Ontario has already experienced the effects of climate change and with more forest fires every summer and increased flooding. Del Duca was at the decision-making table when the Liberals completed the sale of Hydro One, making it harder for Ontario to switch to cleaner electrical home heating due to increased costs. Immediately after his election, Doug Ford ripped up hundreds of environmental contracts and spent hundreds of millions to bulldoze wind farms, costing jobs and using taxpayer dollars to damage the environment. It has become more important than ever to have an NDP government who will fight to protect our homes and the rich resources the North depends on by:

- ➔ Ensuring that at least 25 per cent of cap-and-trade revenue goes to supports for rural, Northern, and low-income families.
- ➔ Provincial action planning on flooding.
- ➔ Investing in forest fire prevention and planting a billion trees by 2030.