

ON YOUR SIDE

The Ontario NDP Plan for the North



ONTARIO
NDP  **NPD**

ON YOUR SIDE for Northern Ontario

Ontario should be a province full of opportunity.

A place where you can find a home, easily access world class health care and kids get the right support in school.

Where you can find a good job and the basics are affordable.

A place where you're excited, not worried, for the future.

But after 7 long years of Doug Ford's bad deals and costly scandals, life is harder in Ontario. Housing costs are out of control, it's harder to find a doctor, and the basics cost you more. Here in Northern Ontario, we see the impact of a government that has neglected the things that matter most.

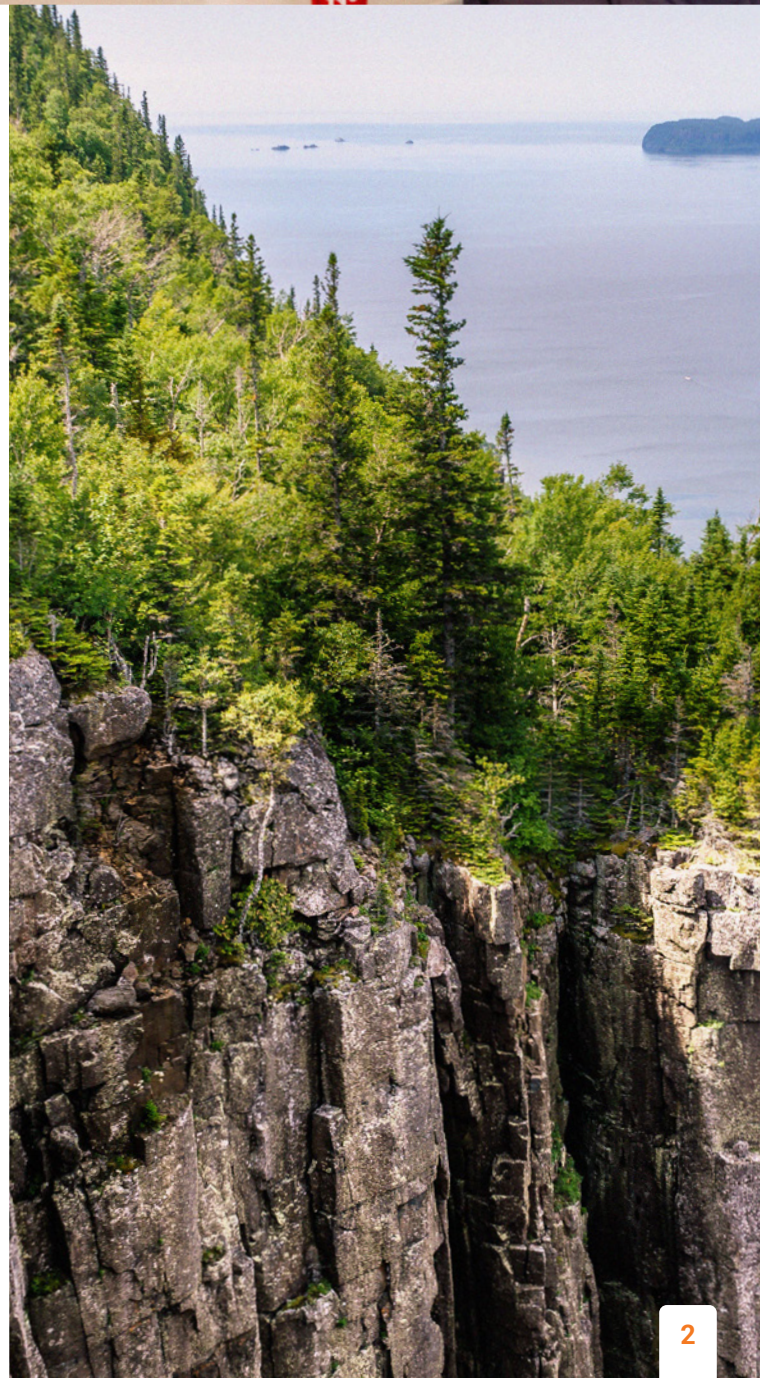
This election, we can change that.

Marit Stiles and the Ontario NDP are on your side to fight rising costs.

We'll hire doctors, build homes, fix schools and defend Ontario jobs and incomes.

We'll get to work investing in your community and building up Northern Ontario, so that we can restore the promise of a good life for people.

Here are our commitments for the North.



Making Life more Affordable

We will provide a recurring Monthly Grocery Rebate that is based on how much the cost of essential groceries like milk, bread and vegetables have increased during Ford's time in office to provide lower and middle-income families with as much as \$122 a month to help keep food on the table.

We'll bring **accountability and transparency to grocery prices** by forcing big retailers to publicly post when they raise prices more than two per cent in a week, and we'll **crack down on price fixing** and other unfair practices by establishing a new watchdog to enforce competition laws and keep food prices fair.

Since Doug Ford became Premier, average rents have skyrocketed across the North – \$385 more expensive every month in Thunder Bay, \$369 in Sudbury, and \$323 in Sault Ste. Marie. To protect tenants and our existing supply of affordable homes, we'll bring in **real rent control to keep costs from climbing** and we will close the unfair loophole that exempts units built after 2018.

We will create a universal School Food Program so that every child, from Sudbury, to Fort Frances, to Sioux Lookout can focus on learning, not their hunger. The program will prioritize fresh food prepared and grown right here in Ontario. We will also double the funding for the First Nations School Nutrition Program.

We will deliver on \$10/day child care after years of delays by Ford's government, and create 53,000 new, public or not-for-profit affordable childcare spaces, and establish a regional waitlist to make it easier to find quality child care close to home. We will establish a wage grid for child care workers and ensure decent work standards to keep them on the job.

We will eliminate parking fees at hospitals for staff, visitors, and patients. No one should be worried about paying for parking at a hospital during an affordability crisis, whether you are a patient, a loved one, a front-line worker, or a doctor.

We will make it easier for seniors to age at home safely with reliable access to home care and a monthly Caregiver Benefit for those caring for loved ones at home. We will make it more affordable for seniors to make renovations that will keep their homes accessible. We will improve access to culturally appropriate health care and Indigenous healthcare practices across Northern Ontario.



Public health care that's there when you need it

We will hire 350 doctors, including 200 family doctors in Northern Ontario and double residency positions at NOSM University. We will return the midwifery program to Sudbury University to increase access to labour and delivery services while growing our francophone health care workforce.

We will connect every Ontarian to a family doctor or nurse practitioner through our Family Health Guarantee, by recruiting more healthcare professionals into community-based primary care teams. A well-resourced, fully-staffed primary health care team, like Meno Ya Win Health Centre, can keep people in community and out of emergency departments and prevent more ER and hospital unit closures. We will implement a centralized referral system to help **clear the waitlists for surgeries** and procedures and reduce wait times for all patients.

We will hire more nurses and establish and legislate safe nurse-to-patient staffing ratios to make sure that patients get the care they deserve. This will help end the reliance on private, for-profit nursing agencies that are costing our hospitals and long-term care homes hundreds of millions of dollars a year.

We will expand and properly fund locum programs that bring doctors from other parts of the province to relieve Northern doctors. We will ensure reliable access to physicians, nurses, and specialists all year, including for francophone communities. We will also increase rates for the Northern Health Travel Grant to help ease the cost burden on patients and their families who have to travel to get care.

We will ensure you can call 911 from everywhere in the North and improve access to emergency medical services. We will return to 90/10 cost sharing with municipalities for ambulance services for two years to get more ambulances and paramedics on the road while maintaining locally focused delivery in partnership with municipal service managers

We will increase funding to community mental health service providers that provide crucial services to help people with addictions. We will establish wage parity for health care workers in community settings to ensure community primary care providers can also offer mental health support. We will fund the addition of detox beds and residential treatment beds.

We will ensure Francophones and First Nations receive reliable home care and long-term care in their language by creating culturally appropriate training, and care that reflects their language and culture. Seniors deserve personal, familiar care, and we will make that a reality. We will work with University of Sudbury and Nipissing University to support northern students to stay and work in Northern communities.

We will expand health care services in French and increase the number of community health centres, long-term care homes, mental health and addiction services by and for Francophones.

We will create a Northern Command Centre that would gather data on system capacity, identify emerging workforce issues and support recruitment and continuing education.



Building more homes you can afford

Homes Ontario will provide grants, low-cost financing, public land and other supports to create at least 300,000 new permanently-affordable public, non-profit and co-op homes within ten years, with Northern Ontario getting its fair share.

Homelessness has tripled since 2016 and is rising faster in Northern Ontario than in southern Ontario. This has imposed an especially high burden on Northern Ontario municipalities, which are left stuck paying the price for provincial policy failures. **An Ontario NDP government will upload the costs of community housing, shelters and homelessness prevention programs** back to the province where they belong.

We will create at least 60,000 new supportive housing units, with access to mental healthcare and addiction treatment, towards a goal of ending chronic homelessness by 2030. We will also work with the federal government to expand the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit so more people can afford their rent.

We will work with Indigenous housing providers and the federal government to support a For-Indigenous, By-Indigenous Housing Strategy to deliver affordable, culturally-appropriate housing.



Fixing schools and setting kids up for success

We will invest in Francophone education in French school boards and French immersion programs in the English system. We will ensure access to French language education programs close to home, and invest in French-language child care, a proven gateway to French language education.

We will fix student transportation funding. Students across Northern Ontario lost bus services when the Ford government increased the distance eligibility. Attendance rates among students in Thunder Bay who lost access to the bus service have dropped. We will make sure you can count on a school bus to come on time for your child to get to and from school safely, by fixing the student transportation funding formula.

We'll make sure our public education system gives students with disabilities the support they deserve. We will reverse Ford's \$1500 per student cut and conduct a comprehensive review of education funding with a focus on a needs-based model that supports every learner. We will improve access to Autism services by creating incentives for mental health professionals, social workers and speech and language to work in schools and community settings in the North.

We are committed to investing an additional \$830 million annually to clear the repair backlog within 10 years and ensure our schools meet the highest standards of safety and accessibility.

We'll hire more staff. Dedicated teachers, educational assistants, child and youth workers, ECEs, custodial and trade workers – they make all the difference helping students get the one-on-one attention they need and maintaining a nurturing learning environment. Having more caring adults in schools makes them safer for everyone.



Defending jobs and building a tariff-proof Ontario

We will protect Ontario jobs, buy Canadian.

Canada is rich in resources that fuel Ontario's economy, and this economic crisis is felt across the country. We will work to improve interprovincial cooperation and remove barriers to interprovincial trade; strengthening our economic resilience, creating jobs, building homes, and stimulating more investment in our economy. We will immediately direct provincial agencies to prioritize Canadian goods in their procurement processes and will work with the federal government to protect the incomes of workers affected by tariffs.

We will get on Team Canada to fight back against tariffs and find new trading partners for Ontario goods. We will find new markets for Ontario products and investment opportunities across Canada and around the world. We will find new customers for Algoma Steel in Sault Ste. Marie, Vale mining operations in Sudbury, that will benefit the thousands of Northerners employed in mining operations and related industries, and the thousands employed in the forestry industry.

We will build an affordable and resilient, tariff-proof economy. By investing in people, infrastructure and communities, we will help weather this storm, create jobs and foster innovation. Our Homes Ontario Plan will help spur the construction of tens of thousands of new homes, creating demand for lumber from Northern Ontario, creating jobs and keeping skilled tradespeople employed. We will also direct the provincial government and provincially-funded entities to adopt Buy Ontario public procurement policies to offset the impact of tariffs on Ontario food exporters.

To address the threat of Trump tariffs on agricultural products like pork, beef, grain products and fresh vegetables, an Ontario NDP government would **completely remove the cap from the Risk Management Program**, ensuring the government has the tools it needs to protect Ontario farmers from Cochrane to Algoma, and the jobs they support.

Innovation starts with education. We're committed to **investing in public post-secondary education** at institutions like Lakehead University, Northern College, Cambrian College, and funding a dedicated French Universite de Sudbury. We will permanently increase base funding and ensure they have the reliable funding they need to deliver world-class education. We will work with Indigenous post-secondary institutions, like the Seven Generations Education Institute to offer more programs and credentialing.

We will restore Canadian Content requirements that Ford changed for the Ontario Line subway project back to 25 per cent, to make sure Ontario transit projects use Ontario made vehicles like those built in Thunder Bay. Northern communities have lost thousands of good paying manufacturing jobs since 2018. We will work with unions, employers and communities in Algoma, Timmins, Scheiber and Terrace Bay to protect jobs and the communities built around industries.

We will continue to champion real reforms that benefit workers that have been rejected by the Ford government including: 10-days paid leave; equal pay; anti-scab legislation, and enforcement of workplace law violations, including severe penalties for unsafe work conditions. We will put an end to the practice of deeming where injured workers are 'deemed' to be able to work phantom jobs they don't have. We will properly classify app-based (gig economy) workers as employees; bring in equal pay legislation; and overhaul WSIB.



Get Northern Ontario Moving, Safely

Highway Safety: An Ontario NDP government will prioritize Northern highway safety, starting with widening Highway 11/17 and Highway 69, while building the Cochrane Bypass. Plans to widen sections of Highway 11/17 and Highway 69 to four lanes have been in the books for years but keep getting delayed. The Ford government cut \$158 million in funding for two Highway 11/17 widening projects in Northern Ontario in order to divert the cash to highway projects in southern Ontario.

Ensure reliable, convenient and affordable passenger transportation in the North. The Ontario NDP will implement a Northern Rail and Bus Strategy that will fast-track the long-delayed delivery of the Northlander passenger service to both Timmins and Cochrane, with a proper connection to the Polar Bear Express. We will also support rail services like the Huron Central and Algoma Central Rail Lines.

We will put an end to private highway maintenance contracts that have been a disaster for Ontario drivers and bring snow clearance and highway maintenance back under public control. We'll also make sure truck drivers receive increased training, so they are prepared for Ontario's snowy winters, especially in Northern Ontario.

We will upload back costs that were unfairly downloaded onto municipal taxpayers, including the costs of maintaining provincially owned "connecting link" highways. We will provide adequate, predictable and consistent formula-based provincial funding to ensure that municipalities are able to maintain, snow-clear and repair their roads, bridges and other infrastructure, with additional support for small and Northern municipalities that must look after large areas with small tax bases.

An NDP government will make urgently needed improvements to Northern Airports that are critical for 29 Ontario First Nations that are accessible only by air. We will upgrade runways and terminal buildings, increase staffing levels, expand service hours, and ensure de-icing equipment at all airports.

We will continue to stand behind our brave wildfire firefighters as they battle increasingly severe wildfires during longer fire seasons due to climate change. An Ontario NDP government will recognize these first responders to be firefighters, so that they may be fairly compensated for their service, and we will remove all barriers to any occupational diseases, such as cancers associated with firefighting, from being recognized by the workplace compensation system.

Stronger Northern Ontario

We would restore the independent office of French Language Services Commissioner, and employ it to review government services according to the French Language Services Act, and take action when agencies fall short.

We will work with First Nations and First Nation organizations to find a path forward on community policing so that all people living in First Nations in Ontario will have access to the community safety services that they deserve.

We will accelerate the expansion of broadband internet infrastructure into Northern Ontario and end the years of delays that set Ontario up to miss the target of connecting all Ontarians to broadband internet by the end of 2025. We will cancel the Ford government's \$100 million contract with the US-based Starlink and replace it with a Canadian alternative that offers better value and security for Ontario consumers. It is crucial that Ontarians living in remote parts of Northern Ontario are not at risk of losing service due to an erratic or unreliable partner.

We want to see development of the Ring of Fire that helps our province – and the world – move towards a more sustainable planet. Ontario's rich mineral resources can help us reduce our dependency on fossil fuels and create good jobs. However, any project must be safe, sustainable and environmentally sound. Most important of all, mining projects must receive the free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) of First Nations on whose territory projects are undertaken.

We help Northern municipalities upgrade their infrastructure to become more resilient to climate change. Ontario's Provincial Climate Change Impact Assessment, published in 2023, warned of "high" and "very high" risks to Northern Ontario as a result of climate change. However, provincial funding for municipal infrastructure has been inadequate and unreliable, leaving Northern Ontario communities at risk.

We will put an end to politicized energy planning that drove up hydro bills, hitting Northern Ontario consumers the hardest. An NDP government will put consumers first, basing energy decisions on evidence and not self-serving politics. We will support distribution rate protection so rural and Northern households do not pay higher electricity delivery costs than other households in Ontario. We'll raise the cap on the Northern Energy Advantage Program by \$50 million per year, allowing more industries in Northern Ontario to access reliable and affordable electricity.

We will support the next phases of the First Nations-led Watay Power Transmission Project, connecting more remote First Nations to reliable and affordable electricity, replacing diesel generators and reducing greenhouse gas emissions by nearly seven million tonnes per year. We support the vision of the peoples of the north to maintain and grow First Nation ownership of major infrastructure on their homelands.

