

Response to National Farmers Union of Ontario

On behalf of Ontario's NDP

Thank you for your inquiries about our platform. We appreciate your interest as an accredited general farm organization. In fact, it was the Ontario NDP government that created the stable funding formula for general farm organizations.

Your questions identify three overarching issues that are very important to the people of Ontario and the Ontario NDP: 1) that Ontarians should have access to a safe and reliable supply of food, grown in Ontario where possible; 2) that Ontario farm families need a stable, profitable income to ensure the long term future of family farms; and 3) that Ontario needs a policy framework that ensures that Ontario's farmland remains productive for all Ontario farmers.

The Ontario NDP supports the family farm, and we are committed to ensuring that the next generation will have the support they need to get established, instead of being squeezed out by government policies and programs that have been designed to give unfair advantages to large-scale industrial operations.

We also believe that all of Ontario benefits from a successful rural economy, and this means new investments in rural infrastructure and services, not cuts.

And the NDP recognizes that there are many types of farmers and farms, so farming policy cannot be one-size-fits-all, imposed from Queen's Park without meaningful consultation from farm families and communities.

An NDP government will work with all farmers *as partners* to address issues such as food safety, pesticide management, climate change, and the protection of Ontario's farmland and drinking water.

Andrea Horwath and the NDP will develop a Provincial Food and Water Strategy, to promote health through access to healthy food and drinking water, and to strengthen the resilience of Ontario's food systems. We will develop and enforce policies to increase food security and protect clean water.

We will develop a food curriculum that will deliver culturally and regionally appropriate learning about growing and cooking food, and we will work with the Ministry of Community and Social Services to make food more affordable and available to low-income families. We will also set targets for reducing obesity and diet-related illness, and working with local providers to municipalities, universities, colleges, schools and hospitals to increase healthy local options.

We will work with farmers and rural communities to protect Ontario's watersheds and irreplaceable prime farmland from unchecked sprawl, land speculation and aggregate extraction.

The Ontario NDP believes that access to safe and clean water is a human right and a public trust, not a commodity to be sold off to deep-pocketed multinational corporations regardless of the public interest. We will create an Ontario Water Strategy to guide water-taking permits for bottled water, land use planning, environmental approvals and other government actions wherever the public's right to water is at stake. We will also ensure that Source Water Protection Plans are implemented, so every Ontarian has access to reliable, safe drinking water.

We will help farmers with their electricity costs by getting private profits off their hydro bill, starting by bringing Hydro One back under public ownership and control. Rural households and farmers paid to create Hydro One, but they were an afterthought when the Wynne Liberals sold off this crucial public asset in order to help themselves and their Bay Street friends. The NDP hydro Plan will also eliminate unfair delivery charges for rural customers, and we will make time-of-use metering optional, because farm work can only be scheduled by nature, not a hydro meter.

The NDP will invest \$100 million annually to improve rural broadband connectivity. We have also committed \$100 million for rural natural gas infrastructure, which will provide a more sustainable alternative to fuels like diesel or oil. And because farming communities also depend on social infrastructure, we have committed to stop rural school closures and will provide funding to fix the capital repair backlog.

The NDP recognizes the important role of agriculture in mitigating climate change. We will support investments to turn farm waste into biogas and connect this renewable energy alternative to Ontario's natural gas grid, reducing energy costs and carbon emissions. We also believe that climate change action must be fair, effective and transparent, and we know that rural communities are carrying more than their fair share of the burden. And so we will dedicate at least 25% of cap-and-trade revenues to programs that support rural, northern, low-income and other disproportionately-burdened communities and families, ensuring a *just transition* to a low-carbon economy that leaves no one behind.

Finally, people in agriculture need predictability. They face challenges and risks with nature and the world markets. That is why we remain firmly committed to supply management as a model that ensures that farmers and consumers are treated fairly. The NDP has also committed to raise the cap on the Risk Management Program by \$50 million in year one, \$100 million in year two and \$175 million in years three and four. We have also committed to not cutting the current OMAFRA budget.

Food security, support for farm families and the rural economy, and the protection and sustainable stewardship of farmland and water are very important to all Ontarians. An Ontario NDP government will work with the agricultural community to support farm families and affirm these principles.

Sincerely,

Ontario's New Democrats