

Haliburton – Kawartha Lakes – Brock NDP

To: Poverty Reduction Network of the City of Kawartha Lakes and the Access to Permanent Housing Committee

From: Don Abel, NDP Candidate, Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock

Date: June 2, 2014

Re: Poverty-related Issues in the Provincial Election

Employment/Income/Social Assistance

1. What is your party's plan to improve opportunities for full-time, year round employment that pays a living wage?

It's time to create jobs by rewarding job creators. The Ontario NDP will implement a Job Creation Tax Credit equal to 10 percent of an employee's salary to a maximum value of \$5,000. A Job Creation Tax Credit would help create up to 170,000 new jobs in Ontario. We will also attract manufacturing jobs by providing an Investment Tax Credit to reward companies that invest in buildings, machinery, and equipment upgrades in Ontario. We will invest in the Ring of Fire and ensure that the entire province benefits from value-added processing jobs. We will invest in re-training programs for workers over the age of 55 to increase older workers' ability to find employment. We will increase the minimum wage to \$12 per hour by 2016 and link it to inflation, while preventing job losses by reducing the small business tax rate from 4.5 percent to 3 percent by 2016.

2. What is your party's plan to increase the social assistance rates so that they reflect the actual costs of shelter, food and basic needs for recipients?

An Ontario NDP government will work to reduce barriers and improve supports for Ontarians experiencing tough times. We will start by increasing social assistance benefits by one percent.

Childcare and Early Learning

1. What is your party's plan to support more affordable licensed childcare?

Too many families are worried about the cost of child care – or whether they can even find safe spots for their kids. Only the NDP will stop Liberal cuts to child care spaces in 18 communities across Ontario and expand access to affordable child care. We have a plan to keep spaces open by providing \$100 million in relief funding plus ongoing annual funding. We will increase wages for early childhood educators, and link the Ontario Child Benefit to inflation after it increases to \$1,310 in July. We will link overall child care funding to inflation, ensuring that funding increases as costs rise. An Ontario NDP government will also modernize child care legislation and stop the spread of big box for-profit daycares. Only Andrea Horwath and the Ontario NDP have a child care plan that makes sense for Ontario's families.

2. What is your party's plan to support early childhood education and full time kindergarten?

It's important that the next government invest in early childhood education and full day kindergarten. An Ontario NDP government will provide wage enhancements for early childhood educators, and we will address issues concerning the roll-out of full day kindergarten. A review of education funding will help us direct resources to schools, which will keep class sizes low and ensure there are enough teachers and early

childhood educators in our classrooms. Only the Ontario NDP will hire an additional 1,000 specialist teachers and 1,000 Educational Assistants to ensure our kids have the supports they need.

Education

1. What will your party do to improve high-school graduation rates and make post-secondary education more affordable and accessible to those wishing to continue with post-secondary school education?

Ontario must do more to ensure all students meet provincial standards and can transition to post-secondary learning opportunities. An Ontario NDP government will focus on student achievement by hiring more teachers and educational assistants. We will also tackle cost barriers that students face by freezing university and college tuition fees and making provincial student loans interest-free. These are the right first steps to address the highest average tuition fees and highest debt burdens in the entire country. We will also invest in students of all ages by topping up re-training programs for workers who are 55 and older.

Food Security

1. What will your party do to reduce the reliance on food banks?

Over 375,000 Ontarians rely on food banks, including over 130,000 children and youth. To confront this problem, An Ontario NDP government will make significant investments in student nutrition programs. With an investment of an additional \$15 million starting this year, we will nearly double the funding for healthy breakfast and snack programs, allowing more than 70,000 additional students to access nutritious meals. We will also expand local food initiatives through student nutrition programs and with more community gardens and community kitchens in schools, supported by our Open Schools Fund. In addition, we will focus on making life more affordable for families. We will cut costs for families by taking the HST of home hydro, saving families approximately \$120 per year. We will also reduce auto insurance rates by 15 percent, prevent unfair natural gas price increases, and increase the minimum wage to \$12 by 2016 and link to inflation. It is time for a government that keeps costs low for families and ensures kids have the healthy head-start they need. That's what makes sense.

Housing

1. What will your party do to improve access to affordable, safe housing for homeowners and tenants?

The Ontario NDP has a strong record of standing up for more affordable housing. We have proposed initiatives to improve housing security, such as expanding inclusionary zoning, licensing landlords, and ensuring rent increase caps apply to all rental units. We will invest over \$400 million over 5 years in affordable housing, and explore the need for additional provincial programs. We will protect tenants by enforcing building standards and maintenance rules. With a \$2 million annual investment, we will help municipalities enforce inspections to ensure landlords respect their commitments to tenants.

2. The elderly as well as people living with disabilities need extra support to remain independent in their homes. What will your party do to assist the elderly or people with physical disabilities to remain in their homes such as funding for ramps, safety bars and other home renovations?

The Ontario NDP understands that building a truly accessible Ontario is crucial. That's why we've worked to strengthen the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, pushing for new standards in health, education, and residential housing. We are also committed to the full enforcement of the AODA, which has not happened under the Liberals. We are committed to making Ontario fully accessible for people with disabilities by 2025. An Ontario NDP government will also eliminate the wait lists for home care, including non-nursing care.

Poverty Reduction

1. If elected is your party committed to fulfilling the goals of the Poverty Reduction Act and if so what strategies will be put in place?

Yes. We will implement a poverty reduction strategy focused on eliminating poverty in Ontario. Too many Ontarians – including over 370,000 children – continue to live in poverty. That is an unacceptable statistic, and it costs our province far too much in lost opportunities. Only the Ontario NDP, guided by our principles of fairness, social justice, and opportunity for all, will deliver results that actually reduce poverty across Ontario. We will invest in more personal support workers and introduce a fully refundable Caregiver Tax Credit of \$1,275 per year.

Health

1. What will your party do to support ongoing universal equal access to health care for all?

Only the Ontario NDP has a comprehensive plan to expand access to public healthcare for all Ontarians. Hospital budgets have shrunk in real terms for three years in a row under the Liberals. It's time to make health outcomes a real priority and deliver results for families. An Ontario NDP government will cut ER wait times in half by hiring 250 more nurse practitioners to treat and discharge ER patients. We will build 50 new 24-hour family health clinics to serve at least 250,000 Ontarians who do not have a family doctor. We will eliminate wait times for seniors with a five day home care guarantee, and create 1,400 new long-term care beds to eliminate the "crisis" wait list. These investments will relieve considerable pressure from hospitals and in-patient beds, allowing for faster transfer from the ER for those who require hospitalization. We can accomplish these priorities with an additional investment of \$205 million annually. We will also support families caring for their loved ones with a fully refundable Caregiver Tax Credit of \$1,275 per year.