

a people's agenda for Ontario

Report from the Provincial Executive On the Coming Provincial Election

Summer, 2011

Draft

Comrade Chair and Comrades:

We are meeting in Convention, following crucial federal and municipal elections, and on the eve of a crucial provincial election.

In all of these elections, the most reactionary pro-war and anti-labour forces have lined up behind the Conservative Party with the aim of electing hard right majorities, to drive down wages and living standards, to liquidate public assets and dismember social programs, massively privatize and deregulate, shift the tax burden decisively off corporations and the wealthy, and sharply curtail civil, democratic, and labour rights including the right to free collective bargaining and the right to strike. All of this is being done with the goal of maximizing sky-rocketing corporate super-profits, and defeating all those opposed to or even critical of, unbridled corporate power in Canada.

As we prepare for the October 6th provincial election - an election we know will be consequential for the working class and unemployed for years to come, and which could reshape the province - we take note of the new Tory machine operating in Ontario that gave Harper his majority in May, and that gave a hard right coalition led by Tories a majority on Toronto City Council last October.

These Tories are very well funded and appear to have the full financial backing of finance capital, including resource, banking, commercial and industrial sectors. Big capital appears to have moved its political support decisively to the Tories, for the present at any rate. This is apparent in the federal election results where thousands of right wing Liberals threw their votes to the Tories particularly in GTA and Toronto ridings where Liberal incumbents were defeated by Tory breakthroughs. Without right-wing Liberal votes in Ontario, and the undemocratic first-past-the-post electoral system, the Tories would not have secured a majority federally.

The Tories represent the interests of the wealthiest corporations in the world, but claim to speak for working people, and aim their messages specifically at the working poor, seniors, small business owners, and those whose pensions and savings were slashed or wiped out in 2008. Their policies are vague, but the message to these groups that *relief is on the way* is always very specific, along with the codicil that *those responsible will be held accountable*. It's a siren song to the fast growing numbers of desperate people living on the edge of the abyss.

The Tory message about high taxes resonates with them because they are overtaxed. Over the last 50 years the share of taxes for individuals has gone from 50% to 92% while corporate taxes have declined from 50% to 8% of total government revenue. The Tories, of course, make no mention of this when they attack public sector workers as lazy fat cats with job security and golden pensions.

The Tories promise economic relief to working people on the verge of economic catastrophe; those who could not afford to miss a single pay cheque; those who have or

are acquiring serious debt to make ends meet and who have no way of repaying it; those who will lose their homes if interest rates rise, or if taxes rise, or if food, fuel or home heating costs rise; or if they lose their jobs, or become too sick or too old to work; or if they never get a decent job to begin with.

To those struggling in a losing battle for the necessities of life, who have not developed class or political consciousness, and who have no experience of social solidarity, it surely must appear that no political party speaks, or fights, or cares for them. They are sitting ducks for the political right who, preying on them in every way, are organizing them politically to help install right-wing majorities in Ontario, while also organizing the most declassed sections to smash strikes and picket lines before and after the election if the labour and progressive movements don't organize them first.

The Tory messages aim to split and divide the working class between the organized and unorganized sectors, playing on the significant wage divide that usually separates industrial workers from others; between public and private sector workers; between men and women, young and old, migrant and Canadian born; workers of colour, Aboriginals, and those of European descent; and between the employed and the unemployed. The goal is block the unity of the labour and democratic movements, and the mass action that would naturally develop in this situation, that Communists and progressives are fighting for now.

The Tories' promise to hold accountable those responsible, is in fact justification for the feeding frenzy that ensues when workers are whipped up to join the attack on other workers, when social solidarity is smashed, and when the employers and their governments – who *are* responsible for mass unemployment and falling living standards – are able to distract and re-direct justified public anger away from themselves and onto higher paid sections of the working class. Or to scapegoat the most powerless social sectors, including the poor, those on welfare, Aboriginal people, migrants, etc.

This cocktail is a very toxic and dangerous political mix.

Yet some of the statistical findings published after the federal election are most interesting. There was no landslide vote for the Tory party or its federal candidates. Vote splitting was a major factor in the Ontario campaign, which, combined with a lot of money spent to hold on to some tenuous Tory seats (including Fantino in Vaughn, Clement in Huntsville) and to buy some new ones in Brampton and Mississauga, and significant vote shifts to the Tories by right-wing Liberals (especially in the last 2 weeks of the campaign concurrent with the NDP surge in Quebec), was enough to deliver the seats needed for a majority.

Second, despite Jason Kenny's courting of the immigrant vote in Ontario, there was no massive shift among new Canadians to the Tories. Of those who did vote Tory, many were promised jobs and access to lucrative business 'opportunities', and are the aspiring capitalists in communities which are no longer homogeneous, but increasingly class divided.

Third, young people and first-time voters did not shift to the Tories, but may have helped the NDP as news of the NDPs Quebec surge percolated in Ontario days before the vote. Further, despite the hype aimed to get young people to vote, the increase in voter turn-out among youth was relatively small, as was the increase in the voter turn-out overall. In both cases turnout was larger than the previous election (which distinguished itself with the lowest voter turnout in Canadian history), but not by a lot. This strongly suggests that young and working class voters, while deeply interested in the urgent issues of war, climate change, mass unemployment, housing, universal social programs, etc, have less and less confidence in the bourgeois political parties and in the antiquated first-past-the-post electoral system, to address these problems or to represent their interests.

Two weeks ago, Jim Flaherty unveiled the Harper government's first budget following the election. It was, as promised, essentially a repackaging of the budget that preceded the May 2 election. But, remarkably it was very short on specifics, especially concerning the \$4 billion in annual cuts which add up to \$17 billion by 2015, and the 25% reduction in federal public service jobs in the same period.

Why so vague? Because an election is coming in Ontario this fall, and the federal Tories want Ontario Tory Leader Tim Hudak to win a majority government, defeating the Liberals and blocking the NDP or a Liberal/NDP coalition. The deep cuts that are sure to come will be painfully visible in the late fall economic update, and in the February budget – after the last of Ontario's three elections in twelve months is over.

There is no question that at the federal level, as our Party's Central Executive Committee observed in its post-election analysis, the struggle must now move decisively into the streets, with the trade union movement across Canada at the very centre of the struggle. The Tories' threat of back-to-work legislation against the strikers at Air Canada, and the lock-out of postal workers by Canada Post this week show that the Tory majority in Ottawa – right out of the gate - is intent on smashing free collective bargaining, and breaking the back of trade union mass resistance. There can be only one answer to this provocation, and that is to build mass support for these unions and their fight to bargain a fair agreement, to build mass resistance to the Tories' anti-labour, anti-people agenda, and to work to bring down this government, sooner rather than later.

In Hamilton, Local 1005 USW has been locked out for almost 8 months though the employer US Steel is finally being prosecuted for breach of its purchase agreement under the Investment Canada Act. The courageous stand of 900 working members to refuse to sell-out the 9,000 retirees as demanded by the corporation to end the lock-out, is a strong indicator of workers' willingness to fight, and of their understanding of the fundamental justice of their struggle, and of the breadth of the attack, and of the breadth of the opposition needed to defeat it.

Next month, Local 1005 will mark the 65th Anniversary of the 1946 strike in Hamilton – the strike that won the closed shop in Canada and in the process defeated a central objective of employers across Canada. We salute the Fighting Spirit of 1946 that locked

out steelworkers in Hamilton are drawing today, and of the miners and smelter workers in Sudbury who struck Vale Inco for a year to save pensions and oppose two tier wages last year. In Hamilton, the Local Union is calling for a generalized and united response by labour to the attack on pensions, wages and workers' rights. This a call the OFL should heed.

The Ontario Federation of Labour Convention, meeting in November this year, must take its place in the forefront of the massive mobilization required to defend workers' rights and interests, and to build the coalitions with communities that can take masses of people into the streets and force governments to retreat, and even - as the struggle moves from defensive to counter-offensive - force governments to resign.

To do this, rightwing social democratic leadership within the OFL must be defeated, and a clear direction of class struggle policies and mass independent labour political action must be adopted. Those right-wing forces campaigning to unseat President Sid Ryan, because of his efforts to move the OFL into mass, independent labour political action in defence of free collective bargaining, must be defeated for the OFL to move forward.

Pulling the labour movement together to block the Tories in the fall election, and to support the election of a progressive majority that will put people's needs before corporate greed, will help to ice the hard right in Ontario, will put labour's policies on the front burner, and will help strengthen the class struggle forces within Ontario's trade union movement.

The outcome of the Ontario election will determine whether the Ontario Legislature will effectively be helping or hindering the Harper government in carrying through its policies of privatization, deregulation, corporate tax cuts, free trade, union busting, and criminalization of dissent.

The best outcome might well be a minority government (but not a Tory minority), given the Liberals' collusion with the federal Tories on the issues of the HST, corporate tax and CIT cuts, privatization by stealth of hospitals and health care delivery, corporatization of universities and colleges and vast increases to tuition fees, refusal to provide a needs-based funding formula for public education, the continuing underfunding of cities and social programs, the underfunding of public transit, and the refusal of both the federal and provincial government to build affordable public and social housing stock and to renovate existing housing stock, to introduce real rent controls, and to introduce a provincial system of universally accessible, affordable, quality public child care.

The Liberals continue to rely on nuclear energy, despite the clear dangers of nuclear reactors demonstrated in Japan in March. This is in addition to the government's callous disregard for labour and democratic rights, as shown in the public sector wage freeze which will cost public sector workers in Ontario a permanent and irretrievable loss of income, in the essential service designation given to the Amalgamated Transit Union in Toronto, to the erosion of labour standards, health and safety, and most egregious to the attack on Canadians' civil and democratic rights and to the police arrests and beatings of

1105 people – the largest mass arrest in Canadian history – at the G20 protests last June. Like the Tories, the Liberals have refused to convene a Public Inquiry into the G20, and have still not repealed the Public Works Protection Act which was used to invoke martial law in Toronto.

They have also competed with the Tories to be the biggest supporters of Israel and the Zionist lobby in Ontario, passing legislation effectively declaring criticism of Israel a hate crime in Ontario.

The Liberals have carried out much of the Mike Harris agenda that they promised to reverse and eradicate in the 2003 election campaign. In many ways, they are Tories in Liberal clothing. Yet, despite this clear collusion, they differ from the Tories in some important ways:

- The Tories will organize a fire-sale of public assets, and eliminate or privatize social programs and public services
- The Tories will cull the public service, eliminating thousands of jobs and vital programs, in the name of eliminating ‘waste’, ‘fat’ and ‘gravy’
- The Tories will force public sector workers to tender for their own jobs, competing with tenders from multi-national corporations like Laidlaw
- The Tories will enact new legislation to prevent future provincial governments from increasing taxes or introducing new taxes
- The Tories will introduce chain gangs and forced labour in new provincial super-jails, a 2 strikes law that will vastly increase the number of people incarcerated in Ontario, a lifetime ban for those convicted of welfare fraud, and changes to the composition of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board that will result in harsher sentencing.
- The Tories will give police new powers to end Aboriginal land occupations by force, and increase police search and seizure authority
- The Tories will introduce a one year waiting period for out of province social assistance applicants, and will legislate so “more people exit welfare” and ODSP
- The Tories will attack the closed shop, and make it more difficult for workers to join a union, to strike and to picket, and make it more difficult for trade unions to engage in political action

Hudak’s platform is the same hard-right platform that the Harris government introduced as the *Common Sense Revolution* in 1995. It was a recipe book for massive public sector wage and program slashing, for privatization and deregulation, a massive attack on education, health, and cities, and a lethal attack on Aboriginal Peoples and those on welfare. The massive and escalating Ontario Days of Action that were created by the labour and democratic movements to bring down the Harris government still reverberate in the province. The bitter taste of this years 10th anniversary of the seven Walkerton deaths and the 1,286 who fell sick as a direct result of the Harris cuts to the health and environment ministries brings a bitter taste to working people across the province.

If Hudak's promise to 'eliminate red tape' is enacted, it could very well lead to a repeat of the Walkerton tragedy, because what it means is deregulation, privatization, and massive cuts to Ministries like health and environment.

Likewise, a system-wide hunt for 'wasteful spending', fat, and gravy trains will result in the gutting of vital staff and services, and could lead to massive privatizations as is now happening in Toronto, to garbage collection and parks, to public housing, and to transportation with road tolls under discussion.

The promise to expand Ontario Works is a promise to force welfare recipients to work for welfare or be cut off. This, like Hudak's promised chain gangs, is forced labour, and illegal under the ILO.

Hudak and his advisors know that electors are wary of a Harris repeat, and have been careful to keep their agenda vague and coded where they think it's too violent. Even the name of the platform - *Changebook* - is non-descript, suggesting a transition, not a Harris counter-revolution.

For example, the section on Aboriginal land rights talks about citizens having the right to leave their homes without a passport, and of enacting new legislation giving police new powers to end this situation. What they are talking about is using lethal force to end the Aboriginal occupation near Caledonia, and other occupations that will come in the future if there is no progress on settling outstanding Aboriginal land claims and redressing third world living conditions on reserves and in cities. Hudak's government will abandon political solutions and adopt police and military force – just as Harris did at Ipperwash when he ordered police to use force to end an Aboriginal occupation, resulting in the murder of Dudley George in 1995. The Ipperwash Inquiry's recommendations which in 2007 became law in Ontario, would be effectively rescinded if a Hudak government is elected.

This particular issue leads to another starting difference between the Tories and the Liberals, and that is the Ontario Landowners' Association – a far-right rural faction within the Ontario Tory Party that is pushing hard for leadership of the provincial Tories, and is campaigning for the use of force against Aboriginals in land occupations, and to defeat the federal gun registry. This is a very active group on the right bower of a very right wing party.

At the same time, the Tory platform is also designed to appeal to a broader audience. The proposals to increase health and education spending and to put it into 'classrooms' and front-line health care, is intended to convince electors that the problem is not under-funding, but over-spending and wasteful spending. The proposal to take the so-called 'stranded debt' off hydro bills is also intended to broaden their base of support, and generate needed votes on election day. Never mind that the Harris government created this stranded debt and loaded it onto the public when he sold off the most profitable parts of Ontario Hydro and left the rest for taxpayers to deal with.

Tax cuts for 'hard working taxpayers' are intended to cover up the big tax shifts that the Harris government started, the Liberals have delivered, and that the Tories intend to reduce even further. Reducing the corporate income rate (CIT) below next year's 10%, means that for them, the only acceptable corporate tax is no tax at all.

One of the ways this tax shift is being delivered is through the HST, which together with the CIT cut and the elimination of the capital tax has removed a \$9 billion obligation from Ontario corporations. The consequence is a major revenue cut for the public treasury, deep new cuts to program spending, new user fees for poorer public services that the already over-burdened public must now also pay, and costly privatized services that no longer exist in the public sector.

In BC, massive public anger and opposition to the HST forced the resignation of Premier Gordon Campbell last winter, and a province-wide referendum on the HST next fall. In BC, the HST has become a symbol of corporate greed and exposed the Campbell government as servants of the corporate elite.

We need to help working people in Ontario understand what the HST really means to their well-being, and help concentrate that anger to block the Tories and defeat the Liberals on election day. If the NDP were wise, they would make 'Axing the Tax' a cornerstone of their election platform, instead of campaigning on HST reductions and exclusions on certain goods and services. Sooner or later – and with our help it will be sooner – working people in Ontario will understand that the HST – a value added tax - is a cash cow that will milk working people, while corporations pay nothing. In Britain, the VAT rose to 17.5% in January 2010. In France, the VAT on food is now 19.6%. How long before Harper and Hudak – or McGuinty – catch up? This is an issue that could ignite the province this election, as it has ignited British Columbians. We need to act accordingly, as the only party in this province calling for repeal and for mass pressure to get it.

Finally, the Canadian economy is not in good shape, and the US economy is in deep trouble. Living next to an elephant, it's a truism that whenever the US catches a cold, Ontario catches pneumonia. Deindustrialization and plant closures continue in Ontario, exports are declining as the Canadian dollar climbs, real unemployment continues to rise, real wages and purchasing power continue to fall; the price of food, fuel and housing is rising, and purchasing power is declining. Add to this dismal picture, the massive federal cuts to social spending still ahead, the increases to policing, military spending, and the package of criminal justice 'reforms' at the top of Harper's agenda, and it's a recipe for a social and economic disaster and massive social upheaval.

For all of these reasons, the Ontario Tories are the main danger in these elections, and we will call on electors, and on the labour and democratic movements in the province to help ensure they are unable to form the next government, despite justified public anger at the Liberals.

The Liberals have spent 8 years delivering a corporate agenda in Ontario, including free trade, deindustrialization, plant closures, massive job losses, privatization mainly through public private partnerships, the health tax and the delisting of insured services, corporate tax cuts and the HST, deficit and debt reduction, attacks on free collective bargaining and on civil and democratic rights. If the Liberals are re-elected, working people can expect more of the same and maybe worse if the economy tips into deep recession.

The NDP in Ontario has moved away from many of its most progressive policies. Its policies are generally tepid when what's required are policies that will bring about fundamental changes, putting real curbs on corporate power and reversing neo-liberal policies like corporate tax cuts and the falling CIT rate, the HST, the breakup of Ontario Hydro, unregulated and unlimited foreign investment, de-industrialization and unregulated capital mobility, massive military spending, and austerity policies that drive down wages and living standards, erode democracy, weaken labour, and undermine Canadian sovereignty and independence.

The NDP's tepid policies are a result of its efforts to broaden its base to include business, and to induce class collaboration and class peace in the working class and the trade unions. They aim to replace the Liberal Party and, as in the past, are likely to focus their main fire on the Liberals, not the Tories. This is another reason why their policies are likely to be softer, not harder. They're looking for Liberal votes.

Further, the NDP is hoping to ride the 'orange wave' to government in Ontario, or at least to substantially increase their seats. This is more likely to happen if the NDP takes a harder position, offering a clear alternative to the policies of the Liberals and Tories. This is also more likely to bring out progressive voters, and young voters.

The Greens in Ontario continue to lean to the right, speaking mainly for small entrepreneurs in the green energy business, though Elizabeth May's strong critique of the Tories at the federal level may help to shift the focus of their critique in Ontario. Certainly, her election to the House of Commons will inspire more interest in the Greens this time, and will help focus the issue of proportional representation and electoral reform.

In this toxic and dangerous situation, what should we say to voters? What's the way out of this mess? What would be the best outcome of this election in the circumstances?

In our view, the best outcome would be to block the Tories and the right, and to elect a minority government which would be most vulnerable to public pressure and pressure from the labour and democratic movements derived from mass independent labour political action. This would hobble the corporate agenda if the Liberals are reduced to a minority, dependent on the NDP; and has the potential to push the NDP leftwards if the NDP forms a minority dependent on the Liberals, provided that the labour and democratic movements keep up a steady and countervailing pressure to the pressure from Bay Street.

At the same time, we need to put forward the perspective of real change and the implementation of a People's Agenda in Ontario – policies and priorities that would put people before profits, and people's needs before corporate greed. There is no other way out for working people.

The Communist Party and its candidates will be the main proponents of this package of policies, though the NDP and Greens may include some of these policies in their platforms. But only the Communist Party will present the whole package, including those parts which fundamentally challenge corporate power and control. That is why our participation in this election is so important. No other party will deliver the message that we will.

* This includes our call for public ownership and democratic control of US Steel and Vale Inco operations in Ontario, of our natural and energy resources including hydro-electric, gas and oil, wind, solar and thermal energy development.

* It includes our call for public ownership of the Big Three operations in Canada, and the development of a Canadian car that's small, affordable, sustainable, and fuel efficient, and that combines in a transportation policy that builds publicly owned urban transit stock and inter-urban light rail stock.

* It includes our call for an industrial policy for Ontario that builds a sustainable value added secondary industry and manufacturing industries not only in Southern Ontario, but in the North and across the province; including ship-building, a machine tool industry, agricultural implements, and an appliance industry.

* It includes our call for plant closure legislation with teeth, to stop plant closures and fake bankruptcies by forcing corporations to provide just cause at public tribunals.

* It includes our call for an emergency program to build 200,000 units of affordable public and social housing over the next 4 years across the province, creating jobs and affordable housing for hundreds of thousands currently on waiting lists in Ontario; to roll-back rents and introduce real rent control legislation, and to prohibit evictions and utility cut-offs due to unemployment.

* It includes our call to introduce a progressive tax system based on ability to pay which would substantially increase and restore corporate taxes including the capital tax and capital gains taxes, introduce wealth and inheritance taxes on estates over \$750,000, while eliminating taxes on incomes under \$40,000, axe the HST – a value added tax and a cash cow for the provincial government - and eliminating regressive sales taxes altogether.

* It includes our demand for public auto insurance, as a first step towards nationalization of the insurance and banking industry.

* It includes our call to greatly expand the public sector to include a provincial system of universally accessible, affordable, quality public child care; to expand provincial health care to include universally accessible, affordable, quality public long-term care; universal dental care and pharmacare.

* It includes our call for a guaranteed annual income above the poverty line in Ontario (replacing welfare and ODSP), a \$16 an hour minimum wage which would lift wages across the board, increase purchasing power, and provide a real boost to the real economy and real economic recovery. It includes our call for a shorter work week with no loss in pay, for 4 weeks statutory vacation, and our fight for earlier voluntary retirement with substantially increased pensions. It includes our demand to make two-tier wages and pensions illegal, to make scabbing illegal, and to ban Money Mart and other loan sharks from operating in Ontario.

* It includes our demand for an early and just settlement of Aboriginal land claims; for implementation of the recommendations of the Ipperwash Inquiry, and for immediate action to redress the economic and social inequalities confronting Aboriginal and Métis Peoples on and off reserve in Ontario.

* It includes our demand for full employment policies in Ontario, and to guarantee Ontario residents the right to a well-paid, permanent job, the right to unionize and the right to strike.

* It includes our demand that our youth have a real future, free of student debt, with quality universal public and post-secondary education tuition-free and accessible to all, and with the prospect of good jobs, and accessible, affordable housing and childcare.

* It includes our demand to guarantee civil and democratic rights, and to protect local democracy and autonomy.

This is a program that has the support of a majority of working people, who stand to benefit by its implementation. It's a program that parallels the OFL's policies, and the CLC's policies, policies fought-for and won by Communists and the left in the labour movement over seven decades.

This is not a socialist program, though it may be that a socialist government will be required to implement it, at the end of the day. This is because of the strength of the reactionary forces which are trying to turn the clock back 100 years in Ontario, and globally. It's a narrow base – and getting smaller - but one which is powerful and can do a lot of damage nonetheless. It is the rat that's starting to feel cornered.

Our class and social allies are broad, but our political allies are scarce due to growing anti-communism, anti-labour sentiment, the changing face of social democracy, and the predominantly pro-capitalist bent of Ontario's Green Party. Still, we must project into this campaign the possible allies that can be won to implement this program. We can say that the left and progressive forces in the NDP and Green parties are objectively allies, as

are the progressive forces in the labour, social and democratic movements. We can call for these forces to combine behind such a people's program, to form a People's Coalition, and to fight for its implementation inside and outside of the Legislature.

We can fight for unity around this program, as we fight for the policies within it, on the hustings, *and* in the trade union halls, the anti-poverty movements, in the youth and student movement, etc, as well as in the workplace, in the universities, on the picket lines, and in the kitchens, where economics and politics come together every month along with the bills.

We can also fight for socialism – as the only political and economic system capable of finally eradicating exploitation and oppression of one human being by another, once and for all. A system capable of eradicating poverty, war, and racism, and of stopping catastrophic climate change by ending the profit driven exploitation of nature by man.

While we recognize that socialism is not on the agenda in this election, we also recognize that in this election we also have to tell working people that in the long run, fundamental social and economic change that can curb corporate power, check the drive to militarism and war, and open the door to socialism, is the only real solution to the reactionary policies of Big Business.

In the process we will win new supporters and new members for our Party and the YCL, new readers for our press, and new fighters and advocates for fundamental change. A stronger Communist Party means a stronger left, a stronger labour movement, and stronger progressive and democratic movements.

Though we are a small party, we know that the growth of anti-communism is a reflection of the hatred and yes - fear – that the reactionary forces have for the Communist Party, and the potential that our ideas will catch fire as they did in the Dirty Thirties, as they are in Latin America, as they will inevitably in Canada, in the dire economic and social conditions facing millions of working class families in Canada - in Ontario – right now. What will it take, they worry, to keep working people inoculated against ideas whose time has come, whose time is overdue?

Ideas like full employment, like rising wages and living standards, like national, social and racial equality, like peace and prosperity, like social and economic security, like democracy. Like people's power.

The Communist party retains all of the potential of its revolutionary theory and practice over 90 years of struggle. It is that potential, and that history, that our class enemies cannot stomach, and that they must attack no matter how small we are, so long as we exist.

That is why the most decisive task in this election is to grow, to come out on October 6 with a bigger Communist Party in Ontario, a stronger party, with more members, supporters, sympathizers, and donors than we have today.

Comrades,

What follows is the platform we will put forward in this election campaign, though it will not appear in its entirety in the election leaflet.

We propose to post the entire platform on the website, and to print the most important points, and highlights, in the leaflet, and direct electors to the website.

This afternoon we will forward our organizational plan for the election, including an election timeline. Let us just say now on the subject of the number of candidates and ridings, that we propose to determine the final number based on discussions with clubs and committees in each area. To date most committees intend to run a candidate, and some have already named their candidates and selected ridings. This is a good start.

A People's Agenda for Ontario

Block the Tories! Dump the Right!

For a People's Majority – People Before Profits!

Vote Communist!

Good Jobs for All!

- Fair trade, not free trade – protect Canadian jobs and sovereignty
- Restore and expand our industrial capacity: put US Steel under public ownership and democratic control
- Build secondary industry: a machine tool industry, appliance industry, and agricultural implements to start with
- Build a ship building industry on the Great Lakes
- Build affordable housing
- Build a Canadian car that's small, affordable, fuel efficient and environmentally sustainable
- Put the Canadian operations of Ford, GM and Chrysler under public ownership and democratic control, fund the pension plan, and use these facilities to build rapid transit and inter-urban light rail rolling stock, and a Canadian car
- Rebuild aging provincial and municipal infrastructure
- Restore and expand social programs and public services
- Stop plant closures – introduce plant closure legislation with teeth
- Bring green energy jobs into the public sector
- Reduce the work week to 32 hours with no loss in take-home pay

Economic Justice - Raise Wages and Living Standards!

- Increase the minimum wage to \$16 and raise all wages
- Replace precarious, part-time and casual work with permanent, full-time, and well-paid jobs
- Rescind the public sector wage freeze
- Legislate universal pay and employment equity; close the gap
- Fight to increase EI to 90% of previous earnings, cover all unemployed including first time job seekers for the duration of unemployment; remove the eligibility requirement to use up severance pay
- Ban strikebreaking; enact anti-scab laws
- Strengthen overtime laws; ban compulsory overtime
- Protect wages and pensions in bankruptcy proceedings
- Substantially increase pensions, lower the voluntary pension age to 60
- Enact and enforce strong health and safety legislation, and hire more workplace health and safety inspectors
- Extend labour rights and protections to migrants and temporary foreign workers
- Introduce a Guaranteed Annual Income above the poverty line
- Raise social assistance and ODSP rates above the poverty line and eliminate claw-backs
- Make May Day a statutory holiday
- Enact a Labour Bill of Rights guaranteeing the right to strike, picket and organize

Enact Public Auto Insurance Now!

Affordable Housing and Rents

- Build 200,000 units of affordable public and social housing over 5 years
- Oppose the sale of municipal social housing
- Fund repairs and retrofits to all public housing units; fund inspectors
- Eradicate bedbugs as a matter of public health
- Legislate real rent controls; roll back rents
- Land bank publicly owned land for future public development and parks
- Fund emergency shelters and transition housing
- Enforce housing standards by-laws
- No evictions or utility cut-offs due to unemployment, strike or lock-out

Quality Public Health Care

- Stop privatization – no to Public Private Partnerships!
- Expand health care to include dental care, pharmacare and long-term care
- Enforce the Canada Health Act! Ban private clinics. No to LHINs.
- Reverse delisting of insured health services
- Rescind Balanced Budget legislation: Fund public health care and hospitals!
- Recognize the credentials of internationally trained physicians and health care workers

Universal, Quality Public Education

- Deliver a new needs-based funding formula now
- Fund a single universal, quality, public and secular school system open to all
- No public funding for private and religious schools
- Invest \$20 billion over 5 years to restore staff and program cuts
- Ban user fees and fund-raising for school essentials
- Reduce class size
- Enact equity in staffing and curriculum
- Restore a universal liberal arts curriculum, including music and arts
- Maintain school libraries and teaching staff in every school
- Make schools into community hubs
- Strengthen local autonomy and democracy

Accessible, Affordable Post Secondary Education

- Eliminate tuition fees for all students
- Fund universities and colleges
- End corporate incursions

A System of Quality, Public Child Care in Ontario

- Build an Ontario system of quality, affordable public child care
- Implement low \$7 per day child care fees
- Create thousands of new, subsidized child care spaces
- Require ECE diplomas for child care workers; improve wages and benefits substantially
- Fight for a Canada-wide system of universal, accessible, affordable quality public child care

A New Financial Deal for Municipalities

- Provide adequate, stable funding in statutory grants, or, provide cities with the powers to tax corporate wealth
- Transfer 50% of gas and road-user taxes to municipalities
- Cut property taxes by 75% - upload the costs of education, health, housing, welfare and transit to the province
- Strengthen local autonomy and democracy
- Fight to give municipalities status in the Canadian Constitution

A Transportation Policy for People

- Full federal and provincial funding for capital and operating costs of public transit
- Create a crown corporation to build and supply rolling stock for public transit and inter-city transport in Ontario
- Expand GO Transit service and routes
- Create a seamless public transit system across the GTA
- Reduce fares and increase ridership

- Eliminate fares for the unemployed, seniors and those on fixed incomes
- No toll roads, yes to bike lanes
- Restore the right to strike to transit workers

An Energy Policy for People

- Public ownership and democratic control of energy and natural resources in an east-west power grid
- Bring solar, wind and thermal energy development under public ownership
- Develop a two-price system for energy: higher for exports, lower for domestic consumption
- Cut residential rates by 50%
- Phase out nuclear and coal fired power; develop solar and wind farms, and thermal energy
- Stop the sell off of municipally owned public utilities

Axe the Tax – NO HST!

- Tax the greedy, not the needy! Axe the HST and retail sales taxes!
- Introduce a progressive tax system based on ability to pay
- Double corporate tax rates; rescind corporate tax cuts
- Eliminate taxes on incomes under \$40,000
- Remove education from the property tax
- Restore the capital tax and raise capital gains taxes
- Collect billion\$ in unpaid and deferred corporate taxes
- Implement wealth and inheritance taxes on estates over \$750,000
- Make the polluters pay!

Fight Racism, Sexism and Homophobia

- End racial profiling
- Strengthen and enforce hate laws
- Enact and enforce equity in education, employment, healthcare and housing as a priority
- Fight to change racist immigration and refugee laws

Civilian Control over Police and Prison

- Call a public inquiry into the G20
- Make municipal police, OPP, RCMP and CSIS publicly accountable, under public civilian boards of control with teeth
- Close provincial boot camps for youth and stop the construction of super-jails:
 - Open up jobs, schools, and community and sports facilities – the best crime fighters!
- No to a 2 strike law and prison gangs
- No to new special police powers

Just Settlement of Aboriginal Land Claims Now!

- Settle Aboriginal land claims justly and without further delay

- Stop private resource extraction and development on Native land and land claims
- Oppose Hudak's plan to end Aboriginal land reclamations with force and new police powers. We need negotiations by Harper – not force by Hudak
- Enforce the Ipperwash Inquiry's recommendations – now the law.
- Recognize Aboriginal self-government and self-determination
- Take emergency action to provide clean water and sewage treatment, healthcare, housing, public and post-secondary education, and jobs for Aboriginal Peoples on and off reserve.

A Sustainable Environment

- Phase out nuclear power, put all nuclear plant under public ownership and control pending closure
- Replace coal fired plants with hydro-electric, wind, solar, thermal and other new and safe forms of energy, and put them under public ownership and democratic control
- Protect farmland from urban sprawl, and landfills
- Fund public transit, and develop publicly owned and controlled inter-urban light rail transit; and nationalize CN and CPR to reduce automobile and truck traffic
- Protect the Great Lakes, oppose the export and sale of Canadian water
- Oppose clear cutting of northern forests, and protect and expand provincial parks and forests
- Oppose strip mining, and push to close the Alberta Tar Sands
- Press governments enforce polluter pay legislation

Yes to Democratic Electoral Reform!

- Yes to Proportional Representation – Make Every vote count!
- Lower the voting age to 16
- Introduce right to recall legislation
- Sharply reduce election spending limits
- Bring media coverage under the umbrella of the Elections Act during provincial elections
- Allow all local residents to vote in municipal and school board elections

We look forward to hearing the discussion. Thank you.