

VOTE SINCE 2011



Vote
Better



Greetings,

Welcome to Vote Better, OPSEU's platform for the 2018 provincial election.

Inside this booklet you'll find concrete proposals that reflect a simple truth: Ontario is richer than it has ever been, and we can afford to invest in ourselves and our communities. We can afford to do better. We just need to vote better.

None of our proposals are out of reach. Far from it. The research shows they are all practical, possible, and enjoy widespread public support.

To do better, we just need to vote for politicians who will get behind these proposals. That's what this platform is all about: giving you the facts and figures you need to talk persuasively with candidates and also with your family, friends, co-workers, and neighbours.

If people are thinking about these proposals when they cast their ballot on June 7, we'll all be better off.

So please keep this little book with you throughout the election campaign:

- Take it to a public debate and challenge the candidates about the proposal that means the most to you.
- Show it to your friends, family, and co-workers and find out what resonates most with them.
- Keep it close to your front door and show it to the candidates when they come knocking.

As you'll see, the platform proposals in this book are divided into broad categories covering all aspects of life in Ontario. After all, OPSEU represents 155,000 frontline public sector workers in a wide range of workplaces from one end of the province to the other — we are experts in making our communities healthy, safe, and prosperous.

If you want even more detailed proposals and information than you find in this book, we've got you covered at www.opseu.org/votebetter.

Along with our main platform proposals, you'll find on our website dozens of other proposals covering everything from the LCBO to Corrections to Developmental Services. Check back often—we'll be adding new proposals as the election campaign develops.

But you can always count on the fact that every one of our proposals will reflect the same simple truth: We can afford to do better. We just need to vote better.

Thanks,



OPSEU President Warren (Smokey) Thomas

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Platform Highlights

Economy 4

Stopping privatization and P3s will save us billions of dollars — savings we can use to invest in a better Ontario. We need a moratorium on new privatization, and a cost-benefit analysis of all current privatizations and P3s, including the sale of alcohol in grocery stores.

Jobs5

Ending precarious work and investing in pay equity will reduce poverty and inequality and all the damage they do to our communities. We need a decent minimum wage, safe workplaces, and the freedom to join a union.

Health..... 6

Investing properly in health care will ease wait times and overcrowding in hospitals, home care, and long-term care. Stable, long-term funding is key — we must have guaranteed annual health investment increases tied to the health care inflation rate.

Education 7

Guaranteeing every Ontarian access to quality education — from grade school to college and university — will ensure we are ready for the jobs and the economy of the future. Public school classes must be properly staffed, and college and university should be free.

Society 8

Fostering equality and diversity will keep our communities safe, caring, and healthy. By investing in community services, universal public child care, and affordable housing, we will ensure our prosperity is fairly shared regardless of age, race, religion, or where you live.

Public Services 9

Reinforcing and expanding public services will provide Ontario a strong foundation for long-term economic growth and social equality. From corrections to “digital government,” we must invest in our public service workers to ensure our safety, prosperity, and privacy are always protected.

Rural and Northern Communities 10

Investing in rural and northern communities will pay long-term dividends to every single Ontarian. When our farming and resource communities have safe roads, good health care, quality schools, and accessible services, their economies thrive, boosting the economy of the entire province.

Environment..... 11

Protecting the environment will bolster our economy and improve the lives of all Ontarians. We must ensure every community has access to clean water and clear air, and shares fairly in the benefits from sustainable resources.

Economy

#VoteBetter for a #BetterEconomy

Vote
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Look back just a couple of decades in Ontario and you might be shocked by what you find: optimism, hope, and fearlessness in the face of the future.

Ontario was a place that was growing better by the day. Together, we had the confidence to invest in ourselves and the courage to build a better Ontario for every single Ontarian. We were building better hospitals, better schools, better highways, and better communities.

We can recapture that spirit. We can keep on building a better Ontario. We are wealthier than we've ever been, and we can afford to invest more in ourselves.

Just look at the basic economics: our Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2017 was \$830 billion, bigger than it has ever been before. And that's not just because our population is bigger than ever. If every Ontarian had an equal share of our wealth, we'd each be wealthier than ever.

But there's the problem: our wealth isn't being shared equally.

Platform Priorities:

End privatization: Government must call a moratorium on privatization and establish a fully public and accountable process to evaluate all proposals to privatize, contract-out, or outsource public services and assets. This process must include a credible and independent cost-benefit analysis of the proposal, and give members of the public and the affected workers meaningful input into the final decision.

Restore corporate taxes to at least 15%.

More than two-thirds of Ontarians want to invest in public services instead of privatizing them.

Statistics from the Royal Bank tell this story clearly: In Ontario, we're investing less of our GDP in public services than almost every other province. And it's the same story in sector after sector:

- We invest less in our community college students than any other province.
- We invest less per inmate in our jails.
- We invest less per person in long-term care.

If we're not investing our wealth in ourselves, where is that wealth going?

Over the past generation, rampant privatization and significant corporate tax cuts have shifted billions of dollars of our common wealth to the wealthy few:

- We lose \$1.4 billion if corporate taxes are cut by just one per cent.
- We're losing at least \$3 billion a decade because of hydro privatization.
- We lost \$8 billion over a decade because of P3 hospitals and highways.
- We lost \$1 billion in a single shot because of the gas plant scandal.

Through privatization and corporate tax cuts, we're giving up billions and billions of dollars. We don't have to. We can invest that money instead in ourselves and our communities. We just need to #VoteBetter for a #BetterEconomy.

Jobs

#VoteBetter for #BetterJobs

Vote Better



As one of the largest and most powerful unions in Ontario, OPSEU is an authority on the world of work.

We know that when people have stable, long-term work that is safe and pays at least a living wage, they are healthier and more productive.

When working people are paid properly, we all benefit because the vast majority of their pay stays right here in Ontario: they buy clothes here, they eat in restaurants here, and they pay taxes here. In other words, working people with decent jobs boost small businesses, support our farmers, fuel our tourism, and help fund our public services.

On the other hand, we all suffer the consequences when working people find themselves stuck in precarious work.

Contract. Part-time. Temp. Casual. Few choose this kind of work. But many are forced into it because workers have so little voice in the workplace these days — a direct consequence of labour laws that discourage unionization and governments that won't regulate or even enforce decent labour standards.

The provincial government can set and enforce stronger labour laws. And as a major employer, it must also set the bar for other employers by closing the gender wage gap and ensuring equal pay for equal work in all its workplaces and all the workplaces it funds.

#BetterJobs means a better Ontario.

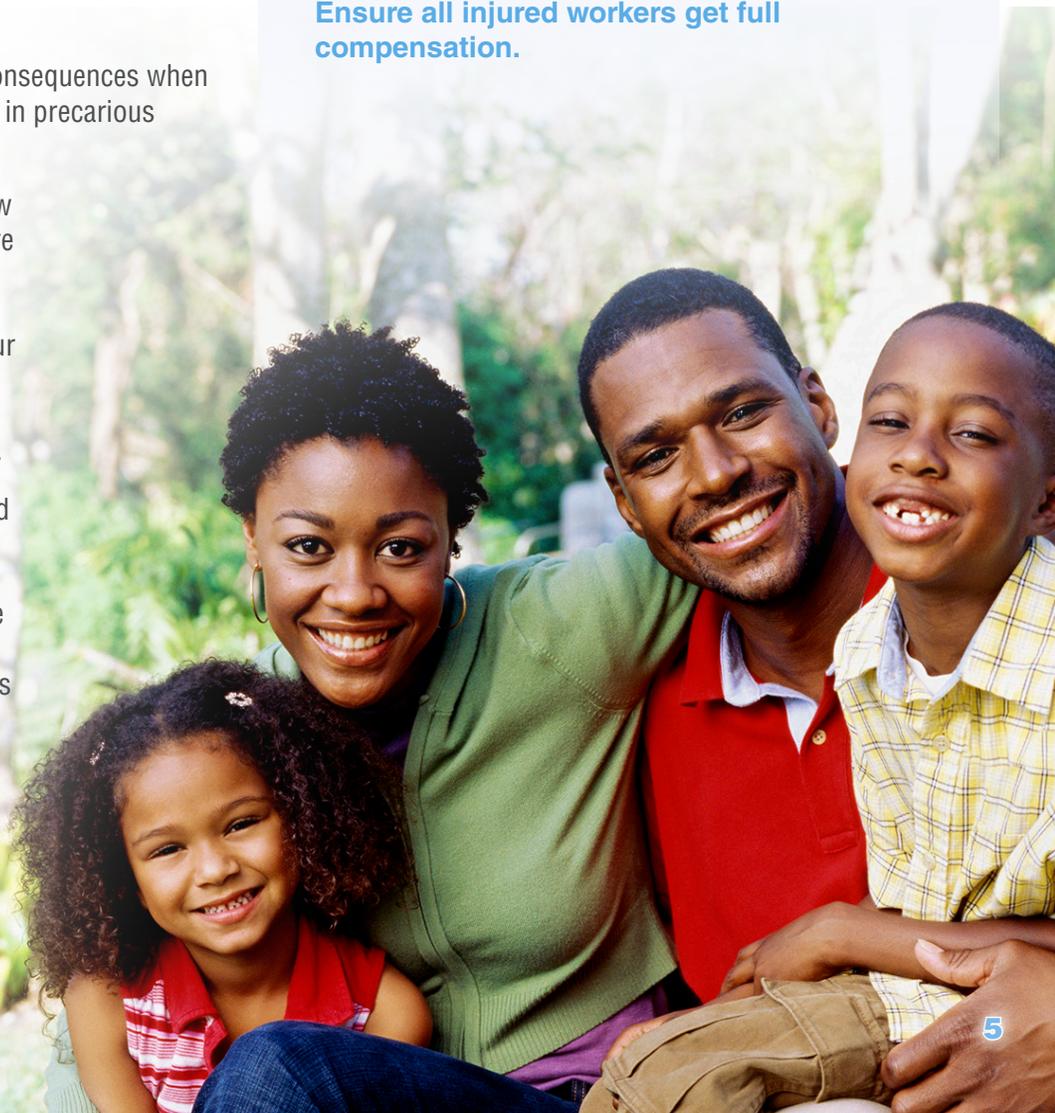
Platform Priorities:

\$15 minimum wage, with annual increases tied to inflation.

Enforce workplace safety laws: kill a worker, go to jail.

Establish a fair unionization process that protects people from intimidation and stalling tactics.

Ensure all injured workers get full compensation.



Health Care

#VoteBetter for #BetterHealthCare

Vote Better



Public health care is part of the Canadian identity, and it remains a top priority for all voters.

Medicare is based on the principle that we ought to receive health care based on need, not our ability to pay. It is the mark of a compassionate, equitable, and fair society; this is what makes us proud of our system.

We know that we are healthier when health care is fully public. That's why better health care means an expanded public system – with universal drug coverage, fully public home care, blood services, long-term care, dental care, and improved mental health care.

#BetterHealthCare means a better Ontario. Let's #VoteBetter

Ontario's Financial Accountability Office says health care investment needs to increase by 5.3% a year to keep pace with health care inflation.

For nearly a quarter of a century, our health care system has been under attack. Public health care services are being cut and privatized. While regular Ontarians continue to suffer, an elite few reap the spoils.

Inequality is growing, as more services are downloaded and privatized, and patients are increasingly forced to pay for these services out-of-pocket – often when they are least able to pay. There has been a surge in precarious work; with more part-time employment, less pay, and poorer working conditions.

Despite significant one-year investments outlined in the 2018 provincial budget, health care funding is still lagging behind; we must #VoteBetter for Ontario.

Platform Priorities:

Stop outsourcing and privatizing public health care services and bring privatized services back into the public sector.

Protect and improve public health care by conducting health-system planning, and investing in the services and frontline staff that are the backbone of the system.

Guarantee annual health care funding increases that are tied to the health care inflation rate.



Education

#VoteBetter for #BetterEducation

Vote
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Education is a priority for Ontario voters and it's easy to see why.

Permanent, good jobs in education mean a better learning environment. And a better learning environment means students who are well prepared to contribute to our communities today and thrive in the economy of the future.

When we invest meaningfully in special education, we make life better for students who have special needs.

Likewise, investments in our colleges and universities pay real dividends to all. When everybody can afford a college or university education, all of our communities benefit.

That's why #BetterEducation means a better Ontario; let's #VoteBetter

Ontario colleges receive the lowest per-student funding in all of Canada.

From primary to post-secondary, our education system is suffering from a lack of investment, a dearth of full-time permanent jobs, and ever-increasing subcontracting and privatization. This is undermining and devaluing the public education system upon which we all depend.

Ontario colleges receive the lowest per-student funding in all of Canada. Meanwhile, the majority of college faculty and support staff are stuck in short-term, precarious jobs.

Families are struggling to ensure their special needs children receive the support they need.

And universities and colleges are privatizing their programs and services, entrusting our students to companies that put profit before all else.

Platform Priorities:

Provide free college and university tuition for all Ontarians.

Fix the province's crumbling public school buildings and infrastructure.

Invest in frontline staff who provide education and support services for students at our boards of education, colleges, and universities.

Stop subcontracting and privatizing our public education programs and services.

Provide stable, long-term education funding that supports quality education services and good jobs.



Society

#VoteBetter for a #BetterSociety

Vote Better



Imagine an Ontario without poverty, or homelessness, or needless despair. Where equality is the norm and diversity is celebrated.

It's an ambitious goal, but not out of reach.

We can afford to invest in the programs and services that show we care: universal public child care, affordable housing, youth mental health and rehabilitation, and community services.

In short, we can afford to care. And as a rising tide floats all boats, we will all benefit.

A better Ontario means #BetterSociety. Let's #VoteBetter

More than 475,000 Ontario children are living in poverty.

Ontario's need for a sturdy social safety net has never been greater.

Child poverty rates are up, the housing crisis persists, our child care costs are the highest in Canada, and too many people are earning less than they should because of discrimination.

Yet community services in Ontario have consistently been underfunded. More cuts and privatization will only make a bad situation worse.

Failing to invest in our communities will cost us all – it will mean more poverty, more inequality, and more children, youth, and adults who are less healthy, less well educated, and less likely to contribute productively to our communities.

Platform Priorities:

Increase base funding to agencies providing community services.

Create a universal, publicly run, not-for-profit child care system.

End the use of privatization, for-profit providers, and competitive bidding – all of which reduce care quality and, in many cases, increase long-term costs.

Meaningfully address the affordable housing crisis.

Ensure true pay equity for all Ontario workers.



Ontario Public Service

#VoteBetter for a #BetterOPS

Vote
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When the Ontario Public Service (OPS) is strong, Ontario is strong.

Across ministries, secretariats, and agencies, OPS employees make sure that Ontario works for Ontarians. They uphold our laws, deliver our justice services, protect our environment, ensure our workplaces are safe, build our infrastructure, and grow our economy.

They safeguard public health, steward our resources, keep our highways and roads safe, and support those in need. They do it all with professionalism and discretion, protecting our privacy and personal information.

And as members of a strong union, OPS employees are also leaders in establishing fair and decent working standards that set the bar for all workplaces.

An investment in the OPS is an investment in ourselves and our communities.

A better Ontario means #BetterOPS. Let's #VoteBetter

Together as Ontarians, we built and own one of the most safe and secure data centres in the world. So why are we contracting out government email to Microsoft?

For decades, successive governments have experimented with privatization, contracting-out and downloading.

Now the evidence is in and it's crystal clear: the Auditor General has confirmed that these policies lead to higher costs and lower quality services. Unfortunately, privatization is still on the table.

Technological advances can be a good thing, but they aren't a replacement for caring and professional workers who are directly accountable to citizens.

Meanwhile, Ontario's correctional system is in crisis. We spend less per offender than any other province and it shows: our institutions are crumbling and there is a critical shortage of correctional officers. An average of two correctional staff members are assaulted every day, while nearly one in three suffer from PTSD.

Platform Priorities:

Rebuild the Ontario Public Service so its offices are fully and professionally staffed, ending long wait times endured by the public.

Address the crisis in corrections with a meaningful investment in staffing and safety.

Return all ServiceOntario Centres to public ownership and management.

Ensure that Ontarians' personal information is stored in secure public data centres located in Ontario.

Restore oversight and management of provincial highways to the Ontario Public Service.



Environment

#VoteBetter for a #BetterEnvironment

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Both the abundance of fresh water and generally favourable climate in Ontario are key to the quality of life we enjoy.

Our health and economic prosperity depend on these environmental advantages we have been blessed with. We cannot take them for granted and we cannot wait for other jurisdictions to solve our problems.

We must ensure that the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry have the funding they need to protect our way of life.

We must reward activities that help the environment and do everything in our power to stop those who put profits and greed before the well-being of generations to come.

It's not a choice. It's a necessity.

#BetterEnvironment means a better Ontario; let's #VoteBetter.

More than 20 First Nation communities don't have safe drinking water.

Climate change is real.

Climate change is warming our lakes and contributing to more blue-green algal blooms across the province. More frequent and severe weather events are causing flooding and overflows of sewage into lakes and rivers.

By the 2050s, temperatures are expected to jump by 2.4 C in summer and 5.3 C in winter. Warming in the northern part of the province will likely be more than twice as great as in the south and melting permafrost will have a disastrous effect on infrastructure.

The number of days in which we experience dangerously high temperatures will double in the near future. The very young and the elderly are particularly susceptible, meaning more days indoors, more hospital visits, and more deaths.

This is not something we can afford to ignore.

Platform Priorities:

Protect the Great Lakes as one of our most important water supplies and natural habitats.

Provide inspectors with the equipment and training needed to protect the public from dangerous pollution and mould.

Save the Ontario Tree Seed Plant facility to ensure the successful the ongoing success of Ontario's forestry industry.

Invest in front line environmental inspectors, and end corrupt corporate "self-oversight."

Ensure that every community has clean drinking water.



Rural & Northern Communities

#VoteBetter for #BetterCommunities

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Better



As Ontario becomes more and more dominated by the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) in terms of population share, economic activity and political influence, it is easy to understand why rural areas and the north often feel neglected.

The province must recognize that even though these areas are changing in terms of demographics and economic opportunities, they are not disappearing. The right set of investments and maintaining their public services can allow them to continue making a significant contribution to the provincial economy and improve the quality of life of the 20 per cent of the provincial population that lives there.

The modernization of farming and resource development has resulted in fewer employment opportunities. But with education, training, and support for innovative new employers, we will open new opportunities in areas such as education, health care, retail, and tourism.

Rural and northern communities are not just part of our heritage. They must be an important part of our future.

A better Ontario means #BetterCommunities. Let's #VoteBetter.

Nearly three million Ontarians live in rural or northern communities.

Change is needed now.

Closing public facilities such as schools, ServiceOntario Centres, LCBOs, and post offices deprives rural and northern communities of important community hubs and good-paying jobs.

Traditional farming and resource based jobs are in decline but centralizing education and training facilities in urban centres severely limits workers' ability to develop new skills and find jobs in their home areas.

Inadequate funding leaves smaller rural communities with basic sewer and water systems that are out of compliance with current environmental regulations.

Platform Priorities:

Call a moratorium on the closure of schools, ServiceOntario Centres, LCBOs and post offices.

Invest in education and training, and innovative, job-creating small businesses.

Commit to the infrastructure investment needed to make rural communities healthy, and new northern resource development a reality.

Establish a Ministry of Rural and Northern Communities to support and advocate for these communities.

Reopen the University of Guelph's agricultural campuses in Kemptville and Alfred, which perform vital training and research for farmers across Ontario.



Vote Better



#VoteBetter



Authorized for distribution

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Warren Thomas".

Warren (Smokey) Thomas
OPSEU President