

VOTING POINT



Vote
Better



Greetings,

Welcome to this sneak peek of Vote Better, OPSEU's platform for the upcoming provincial election.

OPSEU isn't running for office ... so why do we have a platform?

The answer is simple. As a union of front-line workers, we are experts on public services.

We've seen with our own eyes the incredible good that strong public services can do: the lives saved, the children protected, the economies built, and the communities strengthened.

And we've also seen with our own eyes the incredible damage that is done when our public services are starved, cut, and privatized.

We know what works, and we know what doesn't work. And the upcoming election is a golden opportunity for us to share our insights with voters and candidates.

That's what our platform is all about: showing Ontario that if we vote better, we'll do better.

We'll be launching the full platform on May 8 with an exciting and interactive electronic town hall debate.

The platform and town hall will lay out a detailed roadmap for voters and candidates—showing how a series of practical and entirely affordable investments will make Ontario better for all Ontarians.

But as OPSEU's most active members, I wanted to share this sneak peek with you first.

As you'll see, it's divided into six broad categories that sums up the work and expertise of our 155,000 members.

The full platform will go into much more detail, diving deeper into some of the specifics of our many different sectors.

The platform will also show voters and candidates that our proposals aren't out of reach. Far from it: what we propose is practical, possible, and popular.

Ontario is richer than we've ever been. Our per capita GDP is at an all time high. We have more than enough to invest in ourselves and our communities.

And yet, Ontario invests less in ourselves and in our communities than any other province. We invest less per person in health care than any other province. We invest less per student in our colleges. Less per inmate in our correctional system. And less per person in long-term care.

It's time for us to do better. And we know that the vast majority of people are with us.

Public opinion research shows more than two thirds of Ontarians support strong public services over privatization. The same research shows that nearly 70 per cent of Ontarians believe that investing in public services strengthens the economy of small communities across the province.

It's clear: we want better and we can do better. OPSEU's platform will help show Ontarians that all we have to do is #VoteBetter.

In solidarity,



OPSEU President Warren (Smokey) Thomas

Vote Better



Alcohol (Liquor Board Employees)

#VoteBetter #BetterLCBO

Ontario is better with a strong LCBO.

Its profits help pay for teachers, highways, seniors' care, and more. And its professional, highly trained employees ensure that alcohol is sold safely and responsibly.

Alcohol isn't just another consumer product – it's a controlled substance. Most drink responsibly, but a minority don't. Thousands of Ontarians experience harm from someone else's drinking.

We must keep alcohol out of the hands of minors and intoxicated adults. LCBO retail staff do that. They refuse to sell to people who appear intoxicated, and they check customers' ID if they appear younger than 25. Last year, they prevented sales to 250,000 people.

Safety. Prosperity. That's why a #BetterLCBO means a better Ontario. Let's #VoteBetter

\$2.06 billion: the amount of profit our public services received in 2016-17 from the publicly-owned and managed LCBO.

Letting private corporations sell alcohol hurts Ontarians.

It means we give up profits, which will lead to tax hikes and public service cuts.

And it means putting children and people struggling with dependency at risk.

How can grocery corporations be considered responsible retailers when they fixed the price of bread for years? Convenience store sales is another dangerous idea.

With so many potential risks, the government must not allow any more grocery stores to begin selling alcohol. The government must also study the health, social, and economic impacts of privatization to date and, if necessary, reduce or eliminate the sale of alcohol in grocery stores.

Platform Priorities:

Keep the LCBO publicly owned and operated.

Stop the expansion of alcohol sales in grocery stores.

Keep all alcoholic beverages out of convenience stores.



Health Care

#VoteBetter #BetterHealthCare

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

Public 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

The health care funding 'boost' announced in the 2018 Ontario Budget still won't keep pace with the 5.2% rate of inflation for health care.

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 Budget, health care funding is still lagging behind; we must #VoteBetter for Ontario.



Platform Priorities:

Conduct health system planning to properly plan and provide funding based on population need across all health sectors.

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

Protect and improve public health care by investing in the services and front-line staff that are the backbone of the system.





Corrections

#VoteBetter #BetterCorrections

Investing in our correctional system will pay dividends to every single Ontarian. It will make all of our communities safer and more prosperous.

Properly designed, built, and staffed facilities will mean that correctional officers and inmates will be safer inside our facilities. It will also mean that when inmates are released, they'll have the rehabilitation and support they need to re-enter our communities as lawful, productive citizens.

Investing in our correctional system will mean lower crime rates, lower overall correctional costs, and fewer mental health problems both in our facilities and in our communities.

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

5,000 offenders on probation orders violate their orders and "disappear" – every year.

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.

Half of offenders have mental health and/or addictions issues. Officers have no special training on handling these offenders, and there aren't enough correctional nurses to cope.

Probation and parole offices lack basic tools like metal detectors and safe interrogation rooms, meaning they can't carry out basic rehabilitation services, or follow-up on offenders who have violated their probation orders.

Our communities can't afford to let this crisis continue.

Platform Priorities:

Ensure correctional officers and other correctional staff are safe while on the job.

Give the system the resources it needs (e.g., permanent new staff hires in all classifications, infrastructure additions and improvements) to support the transformation of corrections.

Ensure all corrections staff have ongoing training, particularly in the areas of mental health, direct supervision, core programming, and case management, where required.



Education

#VoteBetter #BetterEducation

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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 more successful students who get the attention, quality education and dedicated support they deserve.

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

Likewise, investment in our colleges and universities pay real dividends to all. When everybody has access to quality public post-secondary education, all of our communities benefit.

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

It's time to invest in Ontario's future by investing in Ontario's education sector front line staff.

Across the board, our education system is suffering from a lack of adequate stable funding, a dearth of full-time permanent jobs, and ever-increasing subcontracting and privatization of education services. This undermines and devalues our public education system upon which so many students depend.

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

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

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

Platform Priorities:

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

Stop subcontracting and privatization of our public education programs and services.

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



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Community Services

#VoteBetter #BetterCommunityServices

Imagine an Ontario without poverty, or homelessness, or needless despair. We would all benefit because we would all be healthier, safer, and more prosperous.

It's an ambitious goal, but it's not out of reach. Ontario's economy is richer than it has ever been. And besides, social services aren't a cost – they're an investment in ourselves and our communities.

We can afford to invest in high-quality, affordable child care. We can afford to invest in child protection and treatment. We can afford to invest in child and youth mental health and treatment services, in developmental services and in community agencies.

We can afford to care.

A better Ontario means #BetterCommunityServices. 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; child care costs are the highest in Canada; and too many newly created jobs are precarious and poorly paid.

Yet social services in Ontario have consistently been underfunded. More cuts and privatization will only make a bad situation worse for all of us.

Failing to invest in our communities will mean more poverty, more inequality, and more children, youth, and adults who are less healthy and less well educated.

On our community services, we simply can't afford not to invest in ourselves.

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.





Ontario Public Service

#VoteBetter #BetterOPS

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, steward our resources, build our infrastructure, and grow our economy.

They safeguard public health, keep our highways and roads safe, ensure our workplaces are safe, and support those in need.

And they do it all with professionalism and discretion, protecting our privacy and personal information, and are leaders in establishing fair and decent working standards for all Ontarians.

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 entire world. So why are we in the process of contracting out much of our government email to the multinational corporation Microsoft?

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

The evidence is crystal clear: These policies lead to higher costs and lower quality services. Unfortunately, privatization is still on the table, especially in the area of technology.

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

Government must also address a pervasive problem across the OPS with OPSEU job classifications. Many are outdated and obsolete, making recruitment and retention a major challenge. The result: offices are short-staffed, meaning the public has to wait longer for their services.

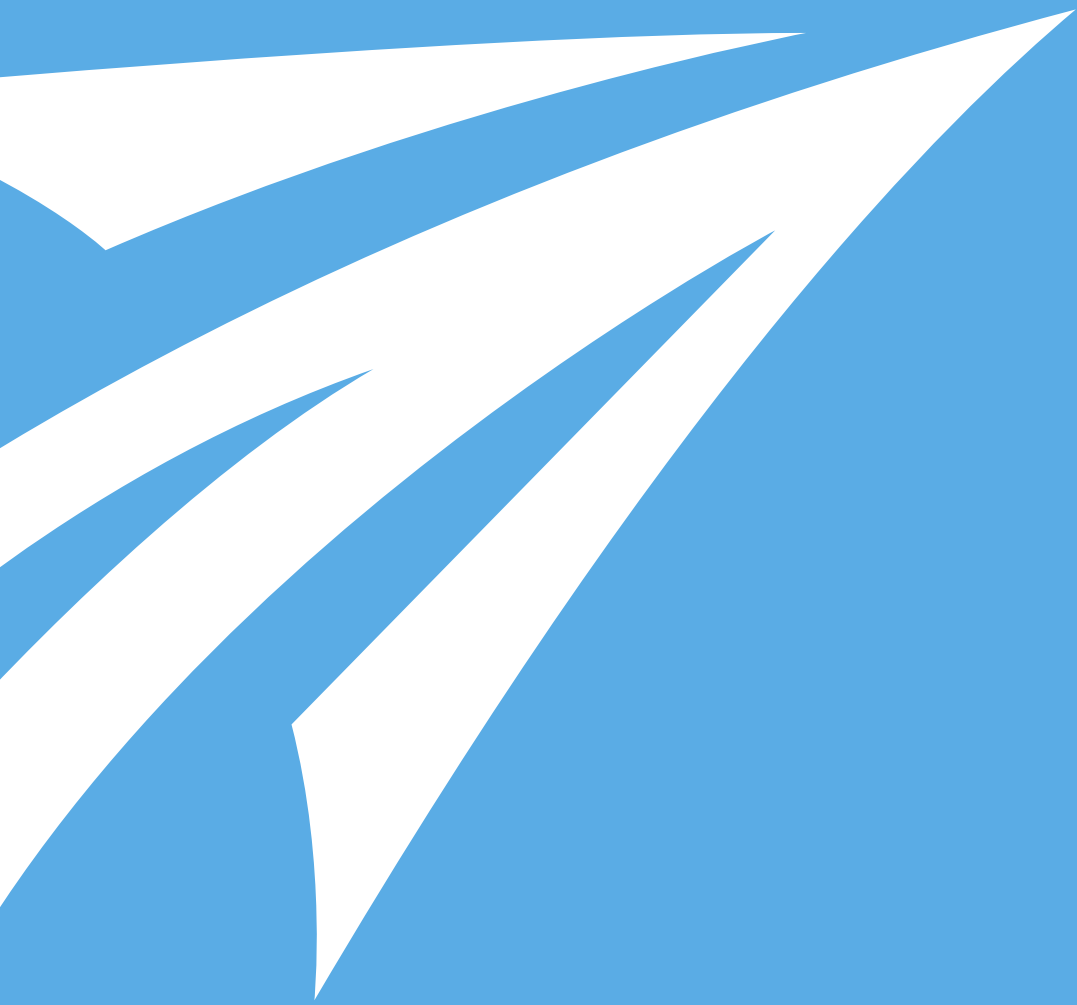
Platform Priorities:

As an employer, the Ontario government must set the bar for the fair and equal treatment of workers by closing the gender wage gap, and instituting a fair and open job evaluation system that will ensure equal pay for equal work.

The government must restore OPS employees to their proper salary step to recognize their length of service after they were forced to endure a two-year wage freeze.

Government must establish a fully public and accountable process to evaluate all proposals to privatize, contract-out, or outsource OPS services or programs. This process must include a credible and independent cost-benefit analysis of the proposal, and give members of the public and OPS employees meaningful input into the final decision.





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