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RE: CFIB Party Leaders' Election Survey

Dear Julie,

Thank you very much for sending your organization's questions to the Ontario Greens. We appreciate the opportunity to speak on these issues that matter to Ontarians. I am happy to provide you with a response on behalf of the party.

Sincerely,

Madeleine Crist
Office Manager
Green Party of Ontario

- 1. Business Affordability: Just as people are struggling with the increased cost of living, small businesses are struggling with the increased costs of doing business. Supply chain issues have led to higher costs for everything, which has driven up inflation. In a February 2022 CFIB survey, 95% of our members said business costs have gone up substantially since the start of the pandemic. In our pre-election survey, 90% said the cost of doing business in Ontario is too high.**
If elected, what is your government's specific plan to improve small business affordability?

Ontario Greens plan to introduce a number of policies to improve small business affordability. Details include :

- Expanding the Digital Main Street program to include nonprofit organizations and providing fulfillment platforms that better enable small businesses to compete with large online companies
- Working with insurance providers to develop an affordable commercial insurance program for small businesses
- Improving opportunities for small businesses and nonprofits to win public contracts through targets and by decreasing current financial and informational barriers
- Developing a small business grant program for Black-owned businesses
- Allowing Ontario's craft spirits, brewers, and wine producers to open independent, off-site stores and retail outlets. We would also improve the distribution network to work for small

businesses, and allow access for hospitality to purchase from these suppliers at a wholesale price of up to 20%

- Developing a program to help COVID-affected businesses file for bankruptcy in a fair and non-punitive way

Ontario Greens will also help businesses join the \$26 trillion new climate economy, as well as helping save energy through energy efficiency programs. We will help businesses by:

- Providing incentives for businesses that participate in training and certification programs in job growth areas such as green building, biomedical technology, renewable energy, and sustainable transportation.
- Providing incentives for businesses involved with green retrofits, reforestation, and other forms of green economic activity to provide Ontario youth with valuable job experience.
- Building on Ontario's strengths in mining, innovation, financing, and auto manufacturing to create a strong electric vehicle manufacturing strategy and electric transportation industry supply chain.
- Providing incentives for businesses investing in energy efficient and low-carbon equipment, buildings, and vehicle fleets.
- Starting in 2023, set a minimum and increasing percentage of public procurements of GHG intensive materials that must be low-carbon, providing a market for heavy industries that are transitioning to low-carbon technologies and processes.
- Redirecting existing business support programs to help small and medium-sized businesses scale up or transition to the green economy.
- Scaling up EV innovation and production through an EV technology innovation fund and a Climate Bank.
- Supporting Ontario entrepreneurs to build world-leading clean businesses in energy storage (e.g. batteries), electric/ fuel cell mobility, smart transit and low-carbon biomaterials.

2. Labour Shortage: In a February 2022 CFIB survey, 68% of our members said labour shortages are having an impact on their business. In our pre-election survey, 72% said the rising cost of living is affecting their business's ability to attract employees.

If elected, what is your government's specific plan to address the province's labour shortage?

We plan to address Ontario's labour shortage by improving workers' rights and wages, to make it more appealing for workers to take jobs in needed sectors. Steps we would take include:

- Increasing the floor of the minimum wage each year by \$1, starting at \$16 in 2022, with a top-up in cities where the cost of living is higher
- Increasing the number of provincially-legislated paid sick days from three to ten
- Banning employers from requiring a sick note from a medical practitioner when an employee is ill
- Closing loopholes that can lead to precarious work, including stricter regulations relating to the temp agency industry. We would mandate temp agency workers earn the same as directly hired workers when they do the same work, and that temp workers must become full hired employees after three months

- Restoring and improving workers' rights to collective bargaining and immediately repeal Bill 124 and the problematic sections of Bill 106.

3. Minimum Wage: A tight labour market has increased pressure on wages, with small businesses' average wage increase intentions reaching a record high in April.

If elected, what is your government's specific plan for the minimum wage moving forward?

Ontario Greens plan to increase the floor of the minimum wage each year by \$1, starting at \$16 in 2022, with a top-up in cities where the cost of living is higher.

4. Red Tape: The regulatory burden has continued to be a top constraint to doing business in Ontario. Smaller businesses with fewer than five employees pay roughly \$7,000 per employee annually to comply with regulations from all levels of government, while larger businesses with 100 or more employees pay only about \$1,200.

If elected, how will your government address the regulatory burden on small businesses?

Ontario Greens would create a new regulatory framework for small businesses. This would involve:

- Reviewing regulations to weed out red tape and costs that disproportionately affect small businesses
- Creating standardized leases to ensure fairness and transparency, and ensure that priority is given to existing tenants when leases are up for renewal
- Creating rent control guidelines for year-over-year increases that apply to all commercial tenants, and implementing a mechanism to enforce rules and resolve disputes

5. Paid Sick Days: In our pre-election survey, 80% of our members said they can't afford to take on new costs to pay for a mandatory paid sick days program. In the same survey, 56% said they would support any paid sick days program if the costs were fully covered by the Ontario government and reimbursed on time.

If elected, what is your government's specific plan for paid sick days, if any?

Ontario Greens understand that when people are able to stay home when they are sick, it helps to keep everyone else healthy and productive. We plan to increase the number of provincially-legislated paid sick days from three to ten and we would provide small businesses financial support to fund this program.

6. Portable Benefits: In our pre-election survey, 87% of our members said they should not be required to take on all costs of a new portable benefits program. In the same survey, 63% said they would be more inclined to support a portable benefits program if the costs were fully covered by the Ontario government and reimbursed on time.

If elected, what is your government's specific plan for a portable employee benefits program, if any?

Ontario Greens would provide all workers with full and equal access to employment rights and benefits programs like EI, CPP, and WSIB, as well as equal pay for equal work, regardless of employment status (i.e. permanent, part-time, casual, temporary).

We would also develop a program of portable extended health benefits for workers in the gig economy, retail and hospitality sectors that is tied to the employee even if they were to change employment.

- 7. Stay Open Plan: Small businesses shouldered the burden of the pandemic with constant on-again, off-again closures and capacity restrictions. While full closures were devastating, so too were capacity limits. In a CFIB survey last fall, 75% of our members said they saw a loss in revenues because of capacity limits on their business, while only 4% saw an increase in revenues.**

If elected, what is your government's specific plan to put the province in the best position possible to avoid future lockdowns and capacity restrictions?

We would focus on protecting public health and avoiding the circumstances that forced businesses into repeated lockdowns and capacity restrictions. Clear communication and transparency with everyone during an emergency such as a global pandemic is absolutely essential. We plan to:

- Conduct an independent public inquiry into the Government of Ontario's response to the COVID pandemic. This inquiry will offer recommendations on preventative measures to reduce harm in the case of future health crises.
- Designate the Chief Medical Officer of Health as an independent officer of the legislature in a watchdog role, with annual publicly available reporting
- Enhance the ability of Public Health Ontario to carry out its mandate by ensuring robust public health science and laboratory support
- Provide adequate and predictable funding to ensure future pandemic preparedness

We will also help businesses through:

- Expanding the Digital Main Street program to include nonprofit organisations and providing fulfilment platforms that better enable small, local businesses to compete with large online companies.
- Supporting the increased staycation tax credit and ensuring it includes dining at restaurants.
- Developing a program to help COVID-affected small businesses file for bankruptcy in a fair and non-punitive way.

- 8. Boosting Consumer Confidence: Our April 2022 monthly survey revealed that only 40% of the province's small businesses are at normal revenues for this time of year.**

If elected, what is your government's specific plan to encourage more people to not only get out and spend in their communities, but also to assure them that it is safe to shop local?

Ontario Greens are committed to building strong and connected communities, which includes strengthening community hubs and creating vibrant, livable neighbourhoods. By making our neighbourhoods and communities enjoyable places for people to spend time, they will be more active in the community and more willing to shop locally. To accomplish this, we will:

- Champion smart growth, by developing “15-minute neighbourhoods” built around public transit, active transportation options, mixed use development, and distributed density
- Update planning laws and zoning regulations to allow for more mixed use development, including allowing small businesses (e.g. corner stores) to operate within residential neighbourhoods
- Build infill housing near transit corridors, to create more density in urban areas

Other steps we would take to encourage shopping locally:

- Supporting the increased staycation tax credit and ensuring it includes dining at restaurants
- Expanding the Digital Mainstreet Program and providing fulfillment platforms to better enable small businesses to compete with large online companies

9. Your Message: If there’s one thing you want small business owners to know, what would it be?

We recognize that small business owners are facing many of the same challenges as other Ontarians, including rising rent prices for storefronts, higher prices for goods, and difficulties from the long periods of COVID lockdowns. We believe that small businesses are an essential part of any community, and we want to ensure we make it easier for them to succeed in Ontario. We believe our platform will ensure small businesses recover and are able to succeed going forward. As a small business owner, Mike Schreiner has always been a vocal advocate on issues affecting small businesses and will continue to support an environment in which they can thrive.