

Ontario Party Leaders' Commitments to Small Business (CFIB Election Survey, 2022)

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?

The Ontario NDP fought for Main Street throughout the pandemic, and we have a solid plan to make sure our small and medium-sized businesses recover stronger than ever.

We will bring in two rounds of a Small Business Recovery Grant, with one payment in 2022 and another in 2023, to help businesses weather the difficult economic conditions they are facing. We'll ensure that, unlike under Ford, our program is responsive to business owners, and payments are disbursed in a timely manner.

We will also work to tackle the high cost of commercial insurance, which we know is a major concern for small businesses. We will work with business organizations and the insurance industry to ensure that commercial insurance is affordable for small businesses.

We'll also work with the community to review the Commercial Tenancies Act to standardize commercial lease agreements so that small business owners know what to expect.

We will ensure that contracts for major infrastructure projects contain provisions for mitigating the impact of construction on small businesses, and we will support local small and medium-sized businesses through our Buy Ontario plan so that small businesses can compete with big industry and use taxpayer dollars to invest in good jobs right here in Ontario.

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?

New Democrats will invest to create thousands of new, paid co-op and internship opportunities so that post-secondary students and graduates can get real-life work experience. We will also double Ontario's Career Ready Program (from 2020 levels) so that our colleges and universities can create additional work-integrated learning opportunities.

Ontario currently has some of the highest child care costs in the country, and that keeps many parents, particularly women, out of the workforce. Our plan to get to \$10/day child care is expected to lead to a large influx of women re-entering the workforce.

New Democrats are also committed to working with both the tourism industry and manufacturers on labour force strategies for their sectors.

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?

An Ontario NDP government will raise the minimum wage with stable, predictable \$1-an-hour increases annually until it reaches \$20 in 2026. To help small businesses achieve this, New Democrats will bring in targeted supports for those that need help increasing wages as we rebuild our economy.

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?

New Democrats are committed to maintaining regulations if they protect health and safety and/or the environment, though we are open to working with the CFIB and the business community to harmonize regulations that might be duplicative or in conflict with other Canadian jurisdictions as well as updating outdated regulations.

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?

New Democrats will bring in 10 personal emergency leave days for all workers, so they can stay home if they are sick or are caring for a sick child. We'll work with businesses to ensure they have predictability and the support they need as we make this transition.

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?

An Ontario NDP government will bring in universal mental health care, dental care, and pharmacare. Since these are universal programs, businesses won't contribute directly to them. These programs will go a long way towards covering the initial programs in any portable benefits package.

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?

New Democrats are committed to making sure that Ontarians stay healthy. That means ensuring that our schools all have up-to-date ventilation systems, and our health human resources feel valued. We will also launch a public inquiry into the province’s COVID-19 response, in order to ensure that we are better prepared for future public health emergencies. We will ensure that our testing capacity is robust and that we have a large stockpile of PPE and other important resources to slow or stop the spread of airborne viruses.

We will also ensure that, in the event of any future public health emergency, New Democrats will be a stable, transparent, and predictable partner to businesses, and provide timely and proportional support that’s easy to access.

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?

We’ll encourage Ontarians to travel within the province and support local tourism by extending the Staycation Tax Credit for another two years. We will evaluate the success of the program at that point and decide whether to make it permanent.

We will also continue to encourage Ontarians to support their local small businesses. In the last few years, many of our MPPs promoted shop local initiatives and we will continue those initiatives if elected. We will also set an example through our Buy Ontario strategy, which uses government procurement dollars to support local small businesses whenever possible.

9. **Your Message**

If there’s one thing you want small business owners to know, what would it be?

New Democrats know that small businesses are the backbone of Ontario's economy, and the lifeblood of our communities.

When Doug Ford favoured big box stores over small business during the pandemic, and when he refused to provide the supports that were needed, the NDP fought hard with and for Ontario's small business community. We will continue to be a strong partner and ally of small businesses across the province.