

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?

I grew up as the oldest son of immigrants who each owned and operated their own small businesses and in my career have led, owned, operated, managed, and have also had to wound down different small businesses. My commitment to keeping the cost of living and doing business in Ontario has been central to my political involvement and is evidenced by founding and leading the *Axe the Carbon Tax* campaign in 2017 over which I was forced to successfully defend myself from political retribution. The New Blue will ensure government remains accountable to taxpayers and we will oppose increased taxation, whether direct or indirect, and increases to the cost of doing business. The Ford PCs have transformed into becoming the Ontario provincial wing of the Justin Trudeau federal Liberal Party of Canada and have continued the costly *anti-small business* legacy of the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals. The New Blue Party's platform, the New Blueprint (newblueontario.com/new-blue-print) commitments include: reduce the HST from 13% to 10%, axe Doug Ford's industrial carbon tax, slashing the regulatory burden, improve our economy's productivity, and reduce hydro rates by taking down the wind turbines. These are all starting measures to reduce the cost of doing business in Ontario and make our economy competitive once again.

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?

The labour shortage is made worse with increased taxation, government programs, complicated regulations, and potential liabilities, all that work to reduce the incentive for Ontarians to find good paying jobs and for employers to employ.

Our education system must be focused on schooling that provides the skills necessary for young Ontarians to enter the labour market in the future and offer opportunities for Ontarians looking to change careers instead of focussing all efforts, as the Ford PCs have, on making it easier for foreign workers (as compared to Ontario workers) to enter our labour market while leaving Ontarians behind.

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?

The minimum wage should be driven by market conditions and consideration should be given to rolling back the Ford PCs ideologically driven decision to legislate changes to the minimum wage.

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?

Slashing red tape and the regulatory burden on all businesses is fundamental to improving the environment for small businesses to succeed in Ontario which is why it is included in our platform, the New Blueprint (www.newblueontario.com/new-blue-print). We must complete a comprehensive review of the regulatory burden brought in by the Ford – Wynne – McGuinty government legacy.

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?

When government funds private enterprise there are always strings attached and costs associated with it that sometimes are not immediately apparent. We would roll back the Ford PC government's mandatory paid sick days program and deal with COVID-19 by expanding early treatment. Decreasing provincial government costs are critical to building an environment for small business to succeed in Ontario. Government's role should be the create an environment for small business to succeed. The Fords PC government believe it is their job to step in and create industries on taxpayer money, pick winners and losers, fund and control private businesses.

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?

We will not be advocating for government funding portable benefits program because ultimately the costs associated with doing so will negatively impact small business disproportionately. Ontario's economy needs to get out of the dark period of terrible growth under the Ford – Wynne – McGuinty regime. We must grow our economy as outlined in our platform the New Blueprint (www.newblueontario.com/new-blue-print) so that employers can afford to offer employees benefits programs as part of a competitive market.

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?

Our New Blue MPP, Belinda Karahalios, was the only current or former PC MPP to vote against the Doug Ford PC lockdown bill and she was subsequently removed from the PC caucus and 19 of us were removed from the PC Party as a result. Since then, we founded the New Blue Party. Belinda is the only politician in Canada to vote against her party on a lockdown related piece of legislation – others like Rick Nicholls and Roman Baber voted in favour of the Ford PC lockdown bill. She knew the harm that Ford PC lockdown bill would have on Ontarians, including small businesses, and she had the foresight to oppose it. We will continue to advocate against lockdowns, restrictions, and other measures that do nothing to help the health and well-being of Ontarians while hurting small businesses, we will expand early treatment of COVID-19, and do a comprehensive roll back of all anti-business measures the Ford PCs have implemented under the guise of dealing with COVID-19 including reducing the powers of local bureaucrats to control small businesses. The details can be found on our platform, the New Blueprint, at www.newblueontario.com/new-blue-print.

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 need government policy geared towards ensuring costs are kept down while take home pay goes up. Under the Ford PCs take home pay has gone down while costs are increasing. The New Blueprint platform (www.newblueontario.com/new-blue-print) offers the solutions necessary to ensure taxation and the cost-of-living decreases, while ensuring we grow our economy. This will improve consumer confidence. We must also expand and make widely available early treatment for COVID-19 so that Ontarians are not afraid to go back to living, working, shopping, and leading normal lives again.

9. **Your Message**

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

My mom and dad were small business owners. I grew up working in my family's fish and chips shop that we operated for 47 years until shortly after my dad passed. I was left with the responsibility to keep running the shop with my mom after dad passed and until we had to wind it down. My youth was largely spent doing everything necessary in to keep the family business running including cutting potatoes. My family's fish and chips shop allowed me to complete two degrees in Civil Engineering at the University of Toronto prior to completing my law degree at the University of Ottawa and then become involved in politics. I think about the long hours working in our family's small business every day including the highs and the lows. Those days are constantly on my mind as we work to continue to grow the New Blue Party of Ontario. We must succeed in growing the New Blue Party so that small businesses in Ontario can trust that there is at least one provincial political party that is in their corner. With the New Blue Party of Ontario, and our platform the New Blueprint (www.newblueontario.com/new-blue-print) the best is yet to come for Ontarians and for Ontario small business owners!

Jim Karahalios, Leader, New Blue Party of Ontario