Laurie Hazzard for Huron–Bruce | ONTARIO NDP

To:

Community Living South Huron
- Josh Gaynor, Co Executive Director

Community Living Central Huron
- Frank Moore, President CL-CH
- Rosemary Foran, Exec. Dir. CL-CH

Community Living Wingham and District
- Debbie Hopper, Exec. Dir CLW&D
- Brenda Schedler, Board President

Community Living Kincardine and District
- Andy Swan

Community Living Walkerton and District
- Michele Bell, CEO

RE: Greetings from the Developmental Service Agencies in the Huron/Bruce Riding

Thank you for an opportunity to provide the Ontario NDP's plan to support the developmental service agencies of Huron-Bruce. Please find my response to each of your questions below.

May is Community Living month in Ontario. Our agencies are committed to assisting people to achieve their goals, vision, dreams and to participate in the community through the promotion of social inclusion. How do we see yourself supporting this vision?
I was a paediatric nurse for nearly 15 years and made a career change to a teacher where I taught at Seaforth High School and later became vice-principal there. In 1999 I led a team as principal to set up the first full service online secondary school in the province - the Avon Maitland Distance Education Centre. In 2004 I joined the Ontario Ministry of Education where I helped develop the province's eLearning strategy and oversaw the development of K-12 digital resources for our public schools. My entire life has been dedicated to improving the lives around me through a lens of social inclusion. My passion for a better today for a better tomorrow aligns my personal hopes with Community Living's goals, visions, and dreams.

Staff recruitment and retention are at crisis levels. Describe your path forward?

The Ontario NDP has a practical, doable plan to rebuild and strengthen health care in Ontario.

We have a vast plan to recruit, retain and support health and social service workers.

Our plan includes taking immediate action to begin hiring 10,000 PSWs and 30,000 nurses - numbers that healthcare experts say we need. We will immediately eliminate Bill 124 (Ford's salary cap bill) and give health care workers the wage they deserve.

Having appropriate wages is a key pillar of our plan for Ontario. We will raise the minimum wage to $20/hour by 2026 and give PSWs a raise of at least $5 above pre-pandemic levels

We'll also develop and implement a strategy to address violence against health and social service professionals.

Each year housing becomes less affordable in Huron and Bruce Counties. What plans do you have to address this problem?

Affordable housing in this province is a huge issue. In Huron-Bruce people don't only struggle to find an affordable house to buy but rental options are also out of financial reach for many too.

The Ontario NDP has released its concrete, doable plan to fix the housing crisis. We'll work hard to ensure every Ontarian has a decent, affordable place to live, whether you're renting or buying.

The first thing we will do is establish a new public agency – Housing Ontario – to build 250,000 affordable homes that are operated by public, non-profit and co-op agencies, not greedy speculators. We will also build an additional 30,000 supportive housing units for people living with mental health and addiction challenges.

We will introduce an annual speculation and vacancy tax on residential property. Modelled after BC's tax, it will apply to all speculators who own houses they don't live in. The rate will be 2% of the assessed value and will be phased in over two years. We'll also maintain the Non-Resident Speculation Tax (NRST) at 20% and close loopholes that allow wealthy investors off the hook.

For renters we will create a portable housing benefit to assist over 300,000 families who can't afford their rent in addition to basic necessities for themselves and their families.

We will also bring back real rent control for all apartments, eliminating the financial incentive for landlords to squeeze out tenants to raise the rent. We will also ensure that you pay what the last tenant paid by scrapping vacancy decontrol.

Most people want to age at home. Several Huron and Bruce County citizens, who have an intellectual disability, have been inappropriately placed in Long Term Care Facilities; one individual being under 34 years of age. What can be done to ensure all residents of Huron and Bruce Counties have the option of continuing to live out their lives supported in their community?

We need a government that brings a multi-prong approach to supporting marginalized people - including those with intellectual disabilities.

An Ontario NDP government will listen to and work with people with disabilities and advocates to dismantle the barriers that stand in the way of their living their best lives.

We'll honour the commitment Ontario made when it passed the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), and work to urgently implement all recommendations in the Onley Report to ensure Ontario is on the path to being fully accessible. This includings introducing financial incentives to improve accessibility in residential housing. We will offer substantial grants for home renovations to improve accessibility and make similar funds available to improve rental units. Additionally we will offer tax breaks to boost accessibility in new residential housing.

Our plan includes building 100,000 units of social housing over the next decade and updating 260,000 existing units to extend their lifespan.

To ensure people with intellectual disabilities can continue to thrive in their communities we have a plan to expand and improve homecare, including creating provincial standards and hiring 10,000 personal support workers.

Together we can create an Ontario where everyone can thrive where they live.

Most individuals supported by Community Living Agencies live on ODSP; the maximum amount an individual can receive annually is $14,028; the cost of living is significantly higher. How do you plan to address this substantial disparity?

For decades, individuals receiving ODSP have been neglected and disrespected, living in an ongoing crisis, well below the poverty line.

The Ontario NDP will change that and permanently lift every ODSP and OW recipient out of poverty. We'll immediately increase rates 20 per cent and work urgently with people with lived experience to create a new system built on justice, dignity, and economic security.

We're going to double the rates in our second year, and index them so no Ontarian will ever live in legislated poverty again. By the end of our second year in office, ODSP recipients will receive $28,056.

Additionally, we'll update the ODSP Act to ensure people living with disabilities are not subjected to a different set of standards than those without disabilities. For example, we'll change the definition of spouse in the ODSP Act to align the timeline by which a person on ODSP is considered common-law with a person not receiving disability support.

Thank you again for this opportunity to share the Ontario NDP's vision on how we can support folks with developmental disabilities.

Let's see where hope takes us!
- Laurie Hazzard
Ontario NDP Candidate for Huron-Bruce