

Provincial Candidate Responses – Jeff Harris, Ontario Libertarian Party

Strengthening Business Competitiveness

Background: Our members and the local business community have made it clear that the rising cost of doing business across the province, and right here at home in Dufferin county, is a constraint on business' ability to invest in the human and physical capital required for growth. The most common and acute concern of the business community in Ontario is rising input costs, especially those costs deriving from government regulation and policy.

Q1: If elected, how would you and your party address the rising cost of doing business in the province to ensure businesses are able to grow and create jobs?

Answer: The Libertarian Party will eliminate corporate income taxes in Ontario. This will make Ontario the most desirable place in North American for businesses to locate, invest and hire staff. Ontario currently has close to 400,000 regulations on the books. The Libertarian party will actively work to reduce unneeded and outdated regulations. On a go forward basis, the Libertarian Party will introduce sunset legislation to ensure that all new regulations have sunset dates built into them (which means that new regulations will automatically expire on a future date if not actively renewed).

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Background: Ontario's electricity prices have risen by 71 percent from 2008 to 2016, far outpacing electricity price growth in other provinces, as well as increases in income and inflation.

Q2: How would you and your party address high electricity and energy costs to strengthen business competitiveness and reduce input costs for business?

Answer: The Libertarian Party will reduce hydro rates by eliminating the Liberal government's practice of buying electricity from renewable energy producers at inflated market rates. The Libertarian Party will focus on clean sources of energy (like natural gas) where the amount of electricity being generated can adjusted up and down to meet market needs - so that no electricity will ever need to be sold at a loss (as often happens right now).

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Background: Overregulation imposes the equivalent of an additional 5 percent to 15 percent import tariff on small businesses compared to larger firms, due to small firms' inability to appropriately navigate the regulatory environment. With 380,000 regulations, Ontario is the most administered province in the country, harming business competitiveness.

Q3: If elected, how would you and your party address the red-tape and regulatory burden that is negatively affecting our local business' ability to compete?

Answer: Ontario currently has close to 400,000 regulations on the books. The Libertarian party will actively work to reduce unneeded and outdated regulations. On a go forward basis the Libertarian Party will introduce sunset legislation to ensure that any new regulations have sunset dates built into them (which means that new regulations will automatically expire on a future date, if not actively renewed).

Fostering Job Creation

Background: Of the new jobs created in the next decade, 40 percent are expected to be in the skilled trades, but only 26 percent of young people aged 13 to 24 are considering a career in these areas.

Q4: If elected, how would you and your party address the skills mismatch in Ontario?

Answer: Student loans should be tied to the outcome of the programs that students are applying to. So, the interest rate should be higher on loans for programs that are less likely to result in a student getting a job when he/she graduates. This policy will help to gradually shift students into fields that are in demand by Ontario businesses.

Building Healthy Communities

Background: Ontarians are experiencing the impact of a decades-long infrastructure funding gap; underserved by a transportation, utility, and telecommunications stock that cannot meet the demands of today and has not been built to reflect the challenges of tomorrow.

Q5: If elected, how would you and your party address the infrastructure funding gap; specifically, with regard to telecommunications such as broadband access and affordability across Dufferin County?

Answer: The best way to get more investment in telecommunications is to eliminate corporate taxes that telco companies pay in Ontario, reduce regulations, and encourage competition. High speed wireless access is already available in Dufferin County and it doesn't require any physical upgrades to businesses (i.e. no fiber cables, no TV cables, not phone cables, etc.). Simply plug in a high speed wireless hub into a standard electrical outlet and you instantly have speed internet access. The issue right now is that it's only offered by Rogers and Bell - and they both have exactly the same pricing structure. Allowing more competitors into the market will help to drive down these prices.

Background: Health care consumes over 40 percent of the provincial budget; approximately \$54 billion in 2016 and demand for health care is only increasing.

Q6: With only 14 percent of Ontario businesses being confident in the sustainability of the Ontario health care system and half of Ontarians believing that the health care system does not need more money, it just needs to be better managed; how would you and your party ensure that the growing demand for health care in Ontario is met with a focus on patient outcomes for money spent?

Answer: Liberal, Conservative and NDP Governments have all tried and failed to fix long healthcare wait times in Ontario. If the government can't provide timely access to medical care, it's immoral for the government to make it illegal for patients to seek care in a private system. A Libertarian government would keep the current publicly funded system in place, but it would also allow private clinics to operate. Giving patients a choice is the moral thing to do.

Improving Government Accountability

Background: Ontario's debt will rise by 21 percent in the next three years, due to interest charges alone, with no existing plans to begin debt repayment.

Q7: If elected, what would you and your party do to achieve long-term fiscal prudence and regain our status as an economic leader in Canada and a reliable investment destination globally?

Answer: A Libertarian government would run a balanced budget and set-up a repayment plan to pay off Ontario's existing debt over a longer period of time. The Libertarian Party will eliminate corporate income taxes in Ontario. This will make Ontario the most desirable place in North America for businesses to locate, invest and hire staff. Ontario currently has close to 400,000 regulations on the books. The Libertarian party will actively work to reduce unneeded and outdated regulations. On a go forward basis, the Libertarian Party will introduce sunset legislation to ensure that any new regulations have sunset dates built into them (which means that new regulations will automatically expire on a future date, if not actively renewed).

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Background: In Ontario, 83 percent of businesses believe that government should conduct cost-benefit analyses of all new policies, regulations or legislation before any changes take effect.

Q8: How will you and your party ensure that policy changes are evidence based and that the impact of these policy changes are evaluated to mitigate unintended consequences?

Answer: Big governments make big mistakes. By limiting the size and scope of government (which is the core of the Libertarian platform), we can reduce that risk.

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Background: Due to the short timeline to implementation of Bill 148: Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act, Ontario business faces a \$12 billion economic problem that will put 185,000 jobs at risk.

Q9: What would you and your party do to ensure appropriate timelines are provided when revising or implementing policy initiatives that impact business operations?

Answer: Policies that will fundamentally change the business environment should be phased in over a period of time to allow local businesses a chance to adjust their operations to comply with the new policies.

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Dufferin Young Professionals' Question

Background: In a recent Toronto Region Board of Trade survey, 83% of young professionals (ages 18-39) say the high cost of housing is making it more difficult to save for retirement, and 65% say the cost of housing is making it more difficult to pay off debt. In addition, 75% intend to own a home, however; cannot afford the down payment to do so.

Q10: How will you and your party address the current issues in our housing market so that young professionals can purchase the homes they desire, and local businesses can attract and retain the talent they need?

Answer: The government can't (and shouldn't try to) control the housing market. The best thing for the government to do is to reduce taxes, reduce regulations and let the free market meet the demand for new housing