

Homelessness and Affordable Housing

Rising housing costs, stagnating incomes, and a critical lack of affordable housing force hundreds of thousands of Ontarians into degrading and insecure housing conditions or homelessness. Many people in our province spend half or more of their income on rent, leaving little money for food and other needs. More than 171,000 Ontario households are on waiting lists for rent-geared-to-income housing, with an average wait time of four years, and in some cases, over a decade. An estimated 12,000 Ontarians are homeless each night, creating demands on shelter services that often exceed supply.

Ask the candidates:

- What comprehensive plan does your party propose to increase and maintain the available stock of affordable (including supportive and rent-geared-to-income) housing in Ontario, through adequate, sustainable, and long-term funding?
- Many people at high risk for homelessness are unable to remain housed without adequate supports, on site and/or in the community. How would your party ensure that people in need can access the supports they require so that they can keep a roof over their heads?
- What policies would your party support to bridge the gap between low incomes and high rents?
- Will your party match federal funding for housing under the National Housing Strategy?
- How will your party work with municipalities to fund emergency shelters and create opportunities for the development of affordable housing?

Poverty and hunger

The rising cost of basic needs, together with the increase in precarious work, have led to poverty and hunger for many in our province. Nearly half a million Ontarians relied on foodbanks last year; one-third of them were children. In recent years, Ontario has committed to a poverty reduction strategy, introduced a Basic Income pilot project, increased worker protections and raised the minimum wage, yet social assistance rates remain well below the poverty line and one in six children in Ontario live in poverty.

Ask the candidates:

- Will you support the January 2019 increase to the minimum wage and other worker protections in Bill 148? If not, what are your plans to support precarious and low-wage workers?

- Do you support the concept of a basic income? How would your government determine an adequate level of income?
- Do you support the recommendations of the Income Security Roadmap for Change report, including increasing social assistance rates and transforming the social assistance system? How would your government ensure adequacy and dignity for those in need?
- What policies will you and your government implement to reduce child poverty?

Please raise these issues with candidates who call or visit your home, at all-candidates meetings, online through social media, and in conversations with neighbours, friends, and family.

Voices of experience:

“Nothing about being homeless is easy, trying to sleep in parks waking up to sprinklers, other homeless people robbing and assaulting you or police telling you to move with the threat of jail... Being ignored by everyone and spit on when you have to beg for money to eat. And then go to the 7-11 with nickels, dimes and pennies to buy a hotdog and the cashier laughs at you for paying in small change. There is nothing easy about being homeless. Not a single thing... But in today's society most people are 2 paycheques and a crisis away from potential homelessness.”

– Jase Watford, a formerly homeless man in Thunder Bay, Ontario.

“Every week, I see people having to make the difficult choice between food or rent. No one should have to make this choice, which comes at the cost of basic dignity. Our income security system should provide a fair and adequate level of financial assistance to low-income Ontarians, without them having to rely on food banks or meal programs in order to simply make it through a month.”

– Michael Fitzpatrick, a volunteer with the Outreach program of Christ's Church Cathedral, Hamilton, Ontario.



Why Prepare for Ontario's provincial election on June 7, 2018?

“Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute. Speak out, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy” - Prov. 31:8-9

One of the benefits of living in a democratic society is that we have multiple opportunities to put our values into practice for the public good. This is particularly true during an election.

There are two temptations which commonly arise during election campaigns. One is to cast our votes for those who appeal to our own self-interest. The other is to become cynical or apathetic about the process and decide not to vote. Both of these represent an abdication of our responsibility as Christians to love our neighbours as ourselves. We are called to seek the welfare of the communities to which God has called us (Jeremiah 29:7) and to speak out and judge righteously on behalf of those in need. (Prov. 31:8-9). Likewise, our baptismal covenant calls us to “seek and serve Christ in all persons,” to “respect the dignity of every human being” and to “strive to safeguard the integrity of God’s creation.” Regardless of whether the party or candidate you vote for is elected, voting is a way of registering your interest in the life and future of our community, and of helping to shape the conditions under which we live and work together.

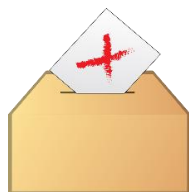
Elections give us an opportunity not only to have a say in our leadership, but to have conversations about how we can contribute to building a healthy and just society. I invite you to have these conversations with the candidates who seek your vote, as well as with your family, friends, neighbours and fellow-parishioners. Learn about the issues. Ask how the parties’ proposed policies will affect not just yourself and your family, but those who are most vulnerable. Pray for the candidates and let them know your concerns. Finally, get out and VOTE!



*The Most Rev. Colin R. Johnson,
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Ecclesiastical Province of Ontario*

On June 7, 2018: Vote for Justice!

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Sharing God's abundant life

Preparing for Ontario's provincial election on June 7, 2018

As Anglicans, we understand that in building up our society we are also helping to prepare the way of God's kingdom. Our prophetic command has always been to seek the welfare of the communities where God has placed us (Jeremiah 29.7), and in baptism, we promise to “seek and serve Christ in all persons”, and to “respect the dignity of every human being.” In recent years, Anglicans across Ontario have been living out this covenant through advocacy on issues of poverty and housing. The provincial election campaign provides us with another opportunity to raise public awareness of the needs and burdens endured by so many in this province — inadequate housing, hunger, and poverty — and to help move policy decisions toward sharing the abundant life which is God's desire for all of us.

Here are a few things we can all do as we prepare to cast our votes:

Learn more about the issues. Visit your diocesan website for information about real needs in our society, and constructive strategies which can help to address them. The Provincial Synod website also has resources to engage with these issues. Visit: <http://www.province-ontario.anglican.ca> .

Pray for candidates, and for voters, that we may all be guided, not by self-interest, but by a genuine care for God's people, and concern for the needs of our neighbours. We invite your prayerful consideration of these issues. Please also keep the leaders and candidates seeking office, along with all citizens, in your prayers during the election campaign. Churches may wish to use a form of the prayers provided in the BAS (p.678) and BCP (p.50) in an upcoming liturgy.

Engage in dialogue:

- Discuss the issues with candidates. Use the list of questions and topics on the reverse of this page to engage with candidates at your doorstep, on the phone, or through Twitter and other social media platforms.
- Get in touch with the politicians in your riding and invite them to respond to your concerns.
- Obtain a “Let's Vote for a Poverty-Free Ontario” sign from ISARC, the Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition (www.isarc.ca) and place it on your church's front lawn.
- Attend all-candidates meetings in your community and ask questions. Why not organize such a meeting at your parish, or co-sponsor one with other churches in your community?