

ONTARIO MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS 2014 VOTER'S GUIDE

Voting Day for the 2014 municipal and school board elections is Monday, October 27, 2014 when people across Ontario will elect approximately 2800 council members and 700 school trustees across the province. As a voter, we have to decide which candidate best reflects our concerns for our community. Here are a few things to consider about candidates before casting your vote. We have focussed only on candidates who are running for city councils.

A PLAN TO DEAL WITH POVERTY

Catholic Charities and its member agencies know that individuals and families live in wretched conditions of poverty. Most have not recovered from the 2008 recession when jobs were lost, livelihoods and futures threatened. Children and their families in cities were hit hard. Many Ontario municipalities are trying to reduce and eliminate poverty.

- Where does the candidate stand on establishing a city-based Poverty Reduction Strategy?
- How does the candidate plan to work with community leaders to tackle poverty?
- What is the candidate's position on municipalities providing opportunities for skills training?
- What issues does the candidate believe must be addressed with regard to poverty reduction?
- How would the candidate deal with the rising level of food insecurity in your municipality?
- *{Over 375,000 Ontarians relied on a food bank in 2013...and 35% were children}.*

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

The consistent lack of affordable housing continues to force thousands of families and individuals to live in deplorable conditions. Rent is one of the major expenses they face. Many must spend at least half of their income on rent, leaving little for food and other daily needs. There are over 150,000 Ontario households on waiting lists for affordable housing. The wait times can be as long as 15 to 20 years for secure, adequate, accessible and affordable housing.

- What is the candidate's position on your city providing more affordable housing?
With regard to supportive housing?
- What action would the candidate take with regard to housing and homelessness?
- As a long term goal to end homelessness in your municipality, does the candidate favour a mandatory *inclusionary* housing program, that is, a program that requires that a portion of all new housing built would be affordable?

ECONOMIC JUSTICE

The gap in income earnings is widening, making it harder for many low income families who want to move forward and out of living below the "poverty line". Many families and individuals are holding down two or three minimum wage and part-time jobs to support their families.

- Do candidates believe that the income gap is getting wider? If so, what do they think can or should be done at the municipal level?
- What will the candidate do to reduce the income gap in your municipality and make an ordinary quality of life available again for ordinary people?

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COMMUNITY AND FAMILY SERVICES

Catholic social service agencies provide badly needed community services and family programs, including help for newcomers to Canada and walk-in mental health clinics. Family violence affects many. Catholic family services offer counselling programs to heal and help.

- How does the candidate propose the municipality help children and families living in poverty?
- What programs would the candidate propose to help First Nations' children living in poverty?
- What is your candidate's plan to address domestic violence in families in your municipality?
- How would candidates make your municipality provide more funding for social service agencies providing counselling and other services that deal with domestic family violence?

PERSONS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Among the most vulnerable among us are people with special needs such as the deaf and persons with developmental disabilities. Accessibility is a major concern, affecting all aspects of their lives: information, housing, education, employment. In the deaf community, it also includes language acquisition for children. The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2005 (AODA) addresses barriers in education, health care, and residential housing.

- How will your candidate push to ensure that a municipality fully implements AODA?
- How will your candidate work to ensure that municipal information is accessible under AODA for the deaf community? For people living with developmental disabilities.
- How does the candidate propose that transportation be provided for special needs people?
- Does your candidate have a plan to provide housing for people with developmental disabilities?

OLDER PERSONS (SENIORS)

There are more adults over 60 today than children under 5. As the number of older persons grows, the number of seniors living in poverty and isolation is also on the rise. Catholic Charities' member agencies working with older persons ('seniors') know that many of them live in poverty or on very small, fixed incomes. Municipalities need to respond positively.

- What priority does the candidate give to the development of affordable housing for seniors?
- How will the candidate ensure delivery of services to isolated seniors in communities?
- Does the candidate have a plan to provide proper home care in the community for seniors and offer affordable, supportive housing in Ontario communities?

ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

As Pope Francis said "creation is a gift...that God has given us... and we use it for the benefit of all..." We need to reduce pollution and waste, if we are to protect the health and welfare of all people: children, older persons as well as poor and vulnerable communities.

- What are the candidate's views on how a municipality should be environmentally responsible?
- What are the candidate's view on how the municipality can minimize its negative impact on the environment with regard to water supply and wastewater, air pollution and air quality; garbage disposal and recycling; and, composting of organic and biodegradable waste?