

A made-in-Ontario environmental plan cannot ignore the crisis we're currently facing

Climate change is one of the most important issues of our time. No political leader today deserves to be elected without a strong and credible environmental plan that protects our air and water, strengthens our economy, and reduces dangerous carbon emissions.

The future well-being of Ontarians depends on our ability to put in place environmental policies that align our aspirations for a strong economy with our principles to maintain a healthy environment for current and future generations.

Unfortunately, the Ford Conservatives have not only put environmental policy on the back-burner, but they have rolled back some of our best efforts, replacing them with schemes that make basic math errors and waste taxpayer money. Since being elected, the Conservative government has wasted hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars through doomed court challenges, misleading advertisements and gas station stickers, and the cancellation of green energy contracts, ripping out of electric vehicle (EV) charging stations, and the tearing down of windmills. This is not the way of the future.

The current government mistakenly believes that a credible environmental policy means a weakened economic policy, but this couldn't be further from the truth. Smart environmental policy is smart economic policy, since a modern economy needs healthy ecosystems to thrive. Many of Ontario's most important industries such as agriculture, forestry, and tourism depend directly on clean air, water, and land.

My plan aims to reduce carbon emissions, bring back affordability for Ontario's hardworking families, and maintain the health of our ecosystems. It employs the *polluters pays* principle that holds those who are damaging the environment responsible for fixing it in an effort to prevent damage to ongoing human health or the environment.

1. Pricing pollution

A. Put a price on pollution through a transparent carbon levy equal to the federal price on pollution

- Putting a price on pollution is the lowest cost option for meeting emissions targets. Under my leadership, a clear and transparent carbon levy will be implemented equal to any carbon levy instituted by the current federal Liberal government. The previous, complex cap-and-trade program will not be revisited.

B. Return carbon levy proceeds directly to consumers

- Any proceeds gained from an Ontario carbon levy will be returned directly to Ontario's consumers through annual rebates, which will be determined based on emission output. Through this system, the less an individual pollutes, the more they save.
- Up to 10% of the proceeds would be used for eco-friendly retrofits to schools, post-secondary institutions, hospitals, and social housing, along with innovations in new technology in an effort to reduce carbon emissions.

C. Ensure vulnerable industries remain competitive through Output-Based Pricing

- To protect trade-exposed industries from competitive disadvantages and to prevent carbon leakage to other jurisdictions, a special output-based system will be put in place for large industrial emitters to encourage emissions reductions while minimizing costs.
- Lead a global summit on the next generation of auto producers. This summit will identify the future of low carbon vehicles and Ontario's role as a leading North American producer.

2. Protect our land and water

A. Protect the Ontario Greenbelt and look at future expansion

- Ontario's Greenbelt is one of our most cherished accomplishments as a province. This ring of natural beauty should not be jeopardized, and as Premier I will work with municipalities to ensure its protection and, whenever possible, its expansion to more areas.

B. Review provincial parkland changes to municipalities

- Parkland should not be a luxury reserved only for wealthy communities, but for all families to enjoy. The Conservatives' changes to municipal parkland policy threatens our local communities' ability to acquire parkland from developers. I will review these changes and reverse any harmful policies to local communities.

C. Ensure the Great Lakes are protected from natural hazards

- The Great Lakes along Ontario's shores are prized natural resources, which contribute enormous economic and social value to our province. If elected, I will ensure these critical resources are given the proper attention they deserve to shield them from natural and man-made threats.

D. Restore and Increase funding to the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC)

- The Nature Conservancy of Canada protects Ontario's most important natural areas and the species they sustain. They have been instrumental in protecting Ontario's most significant natural landscapes, including more than 84,226 hectares of land in Ontario. I will restore funding levels to the NCC so that they can continue their important work.

E. Restore and increase tree planting funding to achieve a target of 1 billion trees

- Trees, especially mature trees, are the best safeguards we have for carbon capture and sequestration. By planting new trees and protecting mature trees through partnerships with NCC, Conservation Authorities and non-profit groups, we can ensure Ontario's tree canopy is strong.
- As Premier, I would organize and establish a marketplace for private farmers to grow these trees profitably, with funding obtained from carbon offsets from the international aviation industry.
- The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) introduced the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSA) to address any annual increase in total CO2 emissions and make them carbon neutral. International flights currently account for approximately 2% of the Canadian aviation industry's CO2 emissions and domestic flights 1% of CO2 emissions.
- Airlines will be required to report their fuel use and emissions as well as buy emissions reduction offsets from other sectors to counteract any increase in their own emissions.
- I will introduce a program to match airlines that need carbon offsets with Ontario farmers that are willing to plant and care for trees producing green offsets.

3. Reduce, reuse, recycle

A. Ban plastic products where there is a clear case for it and alternative options exist

- Waste from plastic products contributes to climate change, and disproportionately burdens our landfills. I will seek alternatives to single-use plastics, where they exist, and otherwise place a ban on single-use bottled water and plastic bags
- Build on the federal government's plans to ban single-use plastics as early as 2021.

B. Protect provincial water supplies by phasing out water-taking bottling permits

- Protecting our groundwater, lakes, and waterways for the future prosperity of Ontario should be a priority for everyone. Ontarians want to feel confident that the quality and quantity of their water resources are protected by good policy that is based on solid science and evidence.
- In 2017, the previous Liberal government implemented a moratorium on permits to take water for bottling. I will expand on this and, through the use of scientific evidence regarding the effects of water taking on our resources, eliminate water taking permits by 2025.

C. Revamp Ontario's recycling program

- Only 15% of Ontario's waste is required to be recycled. We need a new, forward-thinking plan to determine what is recycled, what is returned, and what gets reused. I would look to Nova Scotia's Beverage Container Deposit Refund Program, which accepts various types of "return for refund" beverage containers, to find similar ways to improve our program.

D. Cultivate an environment for renewable energy and environmental protection

- Similar to the federal rebate to bring renewable energy into homes, I will look into implementing programs in Ontario at the provincial level which promote renewable energy at the consumer level and benefit all Ontarians.

4. Environment and economy in balance

- We must seek to achieve a balance between the environment and the economy. Finding ways to reduce negative effects on our climate must be prioritized in research and innovation, including a renewed focus on clean technology, renewable energy, and efforts to achieve a circular economy.
- I will restore the independent office of the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, which maintains accountability on environmental issues in Ontario. In 2019, it was absorbed into the Office of the Auditor General as part of the Conservatives' cuts to our environmental protection resources.
- I will consult with experts and develop an actual plan for the future of nuclear energy in this province. We must consider safety and the waste impact on our environment.