

Mayor Watson, City of Ottawa – 2014 Election Questions

June 3rd, 2014

Dear Mayor Watson,

Thank you for the letter to sharing your priorities for the City of Ottawa. Please find answers to you specific questions below.

Question 1.

Yes. Five hundred million litres of combined raw sewage and storm water overflow is dumped out of city storm pipes into the Ottawa River each year. *The Ottawa River Action Plan, ORAP*, would mitigate such pollution using storage facilities to temporarily hold sewage and storm water until it can be treated. The Ontario NDP has been very clear on our commitment to fund 1/3 of the ORAP project.

Question 2.

Yes. An Ontario NDP government will maintain a dedicated fund of \$29 billion over 10 years to be distributed fairly across the province for transit and transportation investment and will prioritize high impact transit projects, with an additional \$250 million investment annually to kick-start high impact projects. This includes a commitment to fund the provincial share of Ottawa's Stage2 LRT project. In addition to this, the Ontario NDP has also committed to restoring the Ontario Bus Replacement Program, which the Liberals cancelled. This will provide funding to help municipalities replace aging bus fleets.

Question 3.

Yes. An Ontario NDP government will invest over \$400 million over five years as part of the extended investment in the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy. This will allow us to construct and renovate affordable housing units and provide other supports for families who need assistance. We will continue to work with the affordable housing sector to examine potential programs, such as an additional provincial affordable housing program. A NDP government will also enhance tenant protection by enforcing building standards and maintenance rules. We will also increase the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative by \$42 million annually to \$294 million.

Question 4.

Yes. Starting with the Harris government, when Tim Hudak was a cabinet minister, and continuing through successive Liberal governments, municipalities have seen their funding whittled away. Despite promise after promise to turn this around, the Liberals have left municipalities as cash-strapped as ever.

Now, family budgets in Ontario are being squeezed while the Liberal government has downloaded more services to municipalities without giving them the tools to pay for it. The Ontario NDP is committed to making life more affordable for all Ontarians and is concerned about the fiscal challenges facing Ontario's municipalities. We believe that the province needs to work with municipalities to develop tools to meet fiscal challenges and we understand the importance of the, AMO-negotiated, uploading agreement to maintain services.

In 2013 alone, the value of the upload is estimated to be \$1.36 billion. The NDP will maintain the agreed upload schedule and add commitments to increase funding for transit. Furthermore, the NDP will fund an additional \$2 million per year to assist municipalities in protecting tenants and enforcing building standards and maintenance rules.

Question 5.

No. We believe that the current arbitration process has served Ontarians well in the past, but we recognize emerging difficulties for municipalities. We are open to working with stakeholders to consider options for reform.

The Ontario NDP also understands that municipalities need help from the province in dealing with the transition to the new OPP billing model. In 2015, under the proposed billing model an estimated base cost per household of \$260 would be charged along with a cost for Calls for Service. OPP-policed municipalities that currently pay lower than \$300 per household should see their policing costs rise; municipalities that currently pay more than \$400 per household should see their policing costs drop. Some municipalities have had low policing costs with the OPP for many years, while others have paid much higher per household due to a complex billing process. Addressing this discrepancy is important, but the transition for the municipalities who will experience rising costs will result in financial difficulties and the provincial government needs to take a leadership role in mitigating the costs and lessen the financial impact.