

N'Amerind Friendship Centre – Candidate Questionnaire

Dirka Prout

1. If elected, how will you and your government support capacity and capital investments for Friendship Centres?

The NDP knows how important it is to have well funded, Indigenous led, cultural and wellbeing supports in order to uphold reconciliation, combat the intergenerational impacts of colonialism and residential schools, and to build stronger communities where all are safe and cared for. We also know that decades of Conservative cuts and the Liberals' continued underfunding of core programming and capital needs have made it difficult for places like Friendship Centres to carry out their important and necessary work in our communities - only further intrenching the multiple and overlapping crises faced by Indigenous peoples in urban areas such as London. Thus, we at the NDP commit to fully funding community-driven solutions for healing; to providing stable, long-term funding to cultural institutions to grow and promote Canada's diverse cultures; and to ensuring that those in need, including Indigenous women, girls, and LGBTQI2S+ people facing violence and those seeking help for mental health, addictions, and legal issues/proceedings, have access to well-funded, culturally appropriate programming and supports in their communities.

2. If elected, how will you and your government address the crisis in affordable housing and homelessness in Ontario that disproportionately impacts Indigenous people?

It is the responsibility of the government to ensure access to adequate, affordable housing so that all in this country can live comfortably, in safety, and in dignity. Yet, the Liberals, while in power, have continued to neglect the national housing crisis, leaving hundreds of thousands to experience homelessness every year while rent continues to rise in every province and our housing prices grow faster than those in any other G7 country.

The NDP is committed to making real changes for the long-term by tackling the housing crisis at its source, with plans to create at least 500,000 units of quality, affordable housing in the next ten years (with half of that done within five years), waive the federal portion of the GST/HST on the construction of new affordable rental units, set up dedicated fast-start funds to get affordable housing projects off the ground, and mobilize federal resources and lands for affordable housing projects while providing immediate

relief for families that are struggling to afford rent in otherwise suitable housing in the short-term. We also plan to re-introduce 30-year terms to CMHC insured mortgages on entry-level homes for first time home buyers (allowing for smaller monthly payments), help with closing costs by doubling the Home Buyer's Tax Credit to \$1,500, put a 20% Foreign Buyer's tax in place, fight money laundering which drives up housing prices, and provide resources to facilitate co-housing so more Canadians can achieve home ownership.

Importantly, in recognition of the fact that Indigenous peoples have been disproportionately impacted by the country's housing crisis, the NDP plan to additionally implement a fully funded Indigenous-specific National Housing Strategy, co-developed with Indigenous communities, to address their specific needs and to immediately tackle the mold crisis as well as other health and safety risks related to substandard housing.

3. If elected, what actions will you and your government take to improve training and employment outcomes for urban Indigenous people, including youth?

We at the NDP strongly believe that Canada's economic recovery following the pandemic must further reconciliation and economic justice for Indigenous peoples who have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 and its effects. To make this a reality, we are committed to working with Indigenous communities to support their economic development, creating good jobs through investing in green infrastructure and public services, helping Indigenous entrepreneurs by finding solutions for accessing capital and scale up, investing in Indigenous social enterprise projects and entrepreneurship, and ensuring that the federal government prioritizes procurement from Indigenous companies where possible.

Furthermore, unlike Conservative and Liberal governments who have failed to provide necessary core funding for the education of Indigenous children and youth, New Democrats are determined to fully implement Jordan's Principle (ending the court challenge) and Shannen's Dream to advance educational and economic opportunities for Indigenous children and youth. As such, we will work with the provinces and territories, backed by federal investments and infrastructure, to ensure equitable education for Indigenous children is provided on and off-reserve. We additionally plan to support Indigenous youth and their employment and economic opportunities in the wake of COVID-19 by expanding both post-secondary financial assistance and educational opportunities for children who grew up in care, and increasing the availability and accessibility of distance education for rural and remote students.

These initiatives will build on our plans to provide every Canadian lifelong access to publicly-funded education - from affordable child care to university and college, apprenticeships, and retraining programs - including our commitments to work with the provinces and territories to cap and reduce tuition fees, eliminate interest rates on federal student loans, introduce a targeted debt forgiveness program for graduates (that will forgive up to \$20,000 in student debt), move away from loans, and permanently double non-repayable Canada Student Grants. We will also change EI rules to allow workers who quit their job to go to school to qualify for EI benefits, expand options for workers in designated sectors and regions to take EI funded training in advance of losing a job, and create a new Workers Development and Opportunities Fund to expand training options beyond people who qualify for EI so all workers have an opportunity to access broader and better employment options.

4. If elected, will you and your government continue to support the MMIWG2S National Action Plan priorities?

The genocide against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people in Canada is a shameful and devastating tragedy, demanding strong action from our government and all Canadians. This is especially true considering the failure of Conservatives and Liberal governments thus far to take appropriate measures to protect Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, and to care for the families and victims who have courageously shared their stories.

The NDP is committed to making real, systemic change in support of the MMIWG2S National Action Plan priorities through our commitments to reconciliation which include improved access to and funding for culturally appropriate, Indigenous-led programming, emergency shelters, and transitional housing; policies addressing the broader, root causes of violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people (related to cultural and land rights as well as inequalities in employment, housing, education, mental and other health services, and self-determination); implementation of accountability mechanisms in legislation, including a national council for reconciliation, to ensure upholding the human rights of Indigenous Peoples are upheld; and paradigm shifts in policies and systems across Canada, such as our justice system and crime-related data collection, to better serve Indigenous peoples (among other marginalized groups) and combat systemic discrimination.

5. If elected, will you and your government implement a universal childcare program across Canada?

With childcare costs in Canada currently among the highest in the world, it is clear that our country is facing an affordability crisis in childcare due to the inaction and empty promises of Conservative and Liberal governments. The NDP is committed to implementing a high-quality, universal childcare program across Canada to relieve the pressure on Canadian families, and accelerate economic recovery following the pandemic, particularly for women.

In implementing our childcare program, the NDP plan to first provide a relief fund to save not-for-profit childcare centres at risk of closure and re-open spaces that were lost during COVID-19 to improve capacity and accessibility. From there, we will work with the provinces, Indigenous communities, families, and childcare workers to build a universal, \$10 a day childcare system that is inclusive, accessible, and responsive to the needs of all Canadian children.

6. Will you and your government ensure a national urban Indigenous specific strategy is developed as part of a national childcare program?

The NDP is committed to ensuring that Indigenous communities have public services and funding that meets their specific cultural and situational needs, and the respect, support, and resources to make decisions involving the care of their children based on a standard of free, prior, and informed consent. Thus, in the development of our affordable childcare program, we will work closely with both urban and rural Indigenous communities to ensure the needs of all children and families are met. This will build on our plans to end discrimination and ensure that Indigenous children are treated fairly by the government in our implementation of the Spirit Bear Plan, working in collaboration with the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society.

7. If elected, how will you and your government support food security in urban Indigenous communities?

The NDP is committed to supporting Indigenous peoples' food sovereignty and ensuring food security for all. In terms of concrete action this means reforming the Nutrition North program to improve Indigenous families' access to food (including traditional food), working to connect communities to farmers through local food hubs, and developing a national food waste strategy to reduce the huge amounts of food that currently go to waste in Canada. We will also partner with provinces, territories, municipalities and

Indigenous communities to work towards a national school nutrition program that will ensure every child in Canada access to healthy food, no matter their family income, and the food literacy skills to make healthy choices for life. Lastly, as part of ensuring Indigenous food security and sovereignty, we New Democrats are committed to tackling the climate crisis head on and protecting our land and waters in collaboration with Indigenous communities to combat pollution and weather changes which threaten traditional food sources and their very survival.