

Dear Ottawa Food Policy Council,

The answer to all the above questions is yes. Everyone in Ontario deserves access to affordable food to feed their families and keep them healthy. And Ontarians know that local food and local agriculture are vital to Ontario's success. We cannot take Ontario's farms and food security for granted. In the early days of the pandemic, food shortages and empty shelves highlighted how precarious food supply chains may quickly wreak havoc on people's lives.

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture says Ontario has been losing an average of 175 acres of farmland every day to urban development. Farmland loss threatens Ontario's resilience and our ability to feed our communities. This loss of farmland is accelerating under the Ford government, which has used Minister's Zoning Orders to allow well-connected developers to pave over farmland while bypassing environmental protections and public consultation. Instead of committing to a plan that recognizes the importance of farmland, the PCs have implemented a new provincial growth plan that forces municipalities to expand their urban boundaries and sacrifice more farmland. And closer to home, families struggle to pay skyrocketing grocery bills, while family incomes fail to keep pace with expenses.

An Ontario NDP government will develop a Provincial Food Strategy to ensure access to good food and strengthen the resilience of our supply chain from farms to dinner tables. This food strategy will guide policies and investments to put healthy, locally sourced food onto Ontario's tables. We are committed to improving food literacy, supporting jobs in agricultural production and processing. Ontario's New Democrats will also help young farm families and first-time farmers with mentorship, financial advice and loan guarantees. We will protect prime farmland and water from land speculators and sprawl, and focus growth within existing urban boundaries. We will expand Ontario's Greenbelt, while increasing economic opportunities for farmers and agricultural operations. We will also support the Grocery Code of Conduct to improve transparency and ensure fair dealings between grocers, food suppliers and consumers.

Sincerely,

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