

November 2009

## RURAL REFORM

### **Our Values:**

3. Government services should be provided at the level closest to the user of that service, with that level of government being held accountable to voters.
6. We believe that Ontarians are overtaxed and that our tax system must be simplified, reorganized, and taxes reduced.
7. All citizens are equal.
9. We believe that all three levels of government in Canada must have unique and non-overlapping responsibilities.
11. We believe that Ontario's population, her growth, and her economy must be sustainable in regards to our environment.
12. We believe that both rural (including northern) and urban Ontario are necessary partners for a bright Ontario future.
13. We believe that a well-educated population translates into a high standard of living.
17. We believe that modern & well-planned infrastructure is needed to ensure the safety and prosperity of our citizens.

### **Rural Reform is needed in Ontario:**

Ontario's economy has always been based around the economic relationship between rural & urban Ontario. Rural Ontario provides the raw materials (food, forestry products, minerals, water, electricity) that make everything else possible. At one time Ontario was largely rural in nature. The age of the automobile and its accompanying suburban sprawl has led to the loss of valuable farm land, the commuter mentality of bedroom communities overtaking real working towns and villages, and the loss of resident populations in our urban cities and their cores. The impact has hurt rural business, and communities, urban and rural family life, individual health, and the environment. The shift of rural population to the cities and of urban populations to suburbia has created the need for higher taxes to support not only the infrastructure needs created, but also the cost of all manner of government services from health care to schools. The concentration of businesses into our cities has caused a loss of 18-35 year old workers from rural Ontario. Immigration policies that do not involve any settlement requirements have led to the development of cultural ghettos in our largest cities and overstrained social services, plus a loss of entry-level workers in rural Ontario. The positive economic spinoff immigration affords our cities is absent in most of rural Ontario. Existing welfare recipients in urban Ontario could well find good jobs in rural Ontario and afford to live in these areas with their lower cost of living.

### **To that end, we propose the following remedies:**

1. Through a new immigration and settlement programme boost rural and northern labour force and local economic activity.
2. Introduce measures to attract and retain the 18-35 year old population in rural and northern communities.
3. Introduce measures to increase the participation of the rapidly growing young aboriginal population in our economy.
4. Introduce measures to encourage families to have at least 3 children
5. Launch a "Buy Ontarian" programme to encourage Ontarians to shop local and buy "Made In Ontario" goods & services.
6. Introduce a lower rural minimum wage to make job creation affordable in rural and northern Ontario.
7. Introduce planning changes in Ontario which counter urban sprawl and instead encourage redevelopment of core and older/existing neighbourhoods in urban areas. Such measures would serve to grow fully-functioning urban and rural cities, towns & villages rather than merely bedroom communities. Planning changes would also allow farmers to sever rural residential lots along hard-surface roads already serviced with water and gas lines.
8. Take rural and northern Ontario off the northeast North America electricity grid and create localized power generation and distribution networks and facilities. Profits from these local power systems through local use and exports to other jurisdictions will be used to improve local infrastructure and reduce taxes, increasing their attractiveness to businesses seeking new locations in which to locate or expand.
9. Changes to the welfare system would see a programme to encourage urban welfare recipients who are fully capable of working, to resettle to designated rural communities of their choice.
10. Agricultural policy changes would see a two-path approach, to encourage smaller, mixed family farms run on a different business model than the larger, high-debt operations common today.
11. We believe that the aforementioned increases to the rural and northern populations will allow for better education and health care in these areas and reduce the population - and hence economic - loss to large urban centres. This means saving rural schools and hospitals by increasing their customer base, allowing further tax reductions to local ratepayers.
12. To maintain rural roads, allow upper tier municipalities to collect road tolls on heavy vehicles on certain routes that suffer high volumes of such vehicles to cover the cost of road damage.