

Standing up for everyday families
like yours in **Northern Ontario**



Jack Layton
and the **New Democrats**

2008 NDP Northern Ontario Regional Platform



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everyday families
like yours in Northern
Ontario

A message from the Northern Ontario New Democrat Team

For too long, working families in Northern Ontario have been ignored and taken for granted by governments in Ottawa.

It's the same old story. You work hard to make a good home, raise your family, get your children through school, try to give them the same or better opportunities you had. But the harder you work, the farther you fall behind. Skyrocketing gas prices, rising food costs, hydro bills – it never ends. You play by the rules, but never seem to get ahead.

Through it all, down in Ottawa, governments have poured **billions into corporate tax giveaways**, and failed to recognize the legitimate needs of Northern Ontario workers.

Instead of supporting working families in Northern Ontario, Stephen Harper and Stéphane Dion teamed up in Parliament to hand Canada's wealthiest corporations a \$50 billion tax giveaway – untargeted, unneeded, and unrelated to the public interest in job creation or environmental protection.

It doesn't have to be this way.

Jack Layton and the Northern Ontario New Democrat Team will act on the priorities of the kitchen table, not just the boardroom table. That will be a huge change from the way things have been done in the past. Not just change from the last 25 months, but change from the last 25 years.

It's a change that will put people first.

Jack Layton and the Northern Ontario New Democrat Team will:

- Make sure you and your family have timely **access to quality health care** when you need it.
- **Protect good jobs** in our communities, and take action to get Northern Ontario working again.
- **Make corporate polluters pay** to clean up the mess they've made, not ordinary families.
- Build **stronger communities** by supporting local services.
- Stop gas price gouging.
- Establish a new relationship, based on honour and respect, with First Nations.

You can count on Jack Layton and the Northern Ontario New Democrat Team to put you and your family first.

When ordinary Canadians stick together, we can achieve great things. We can build a society that puts people first.

Your vote will make a difference. Don't let them tell you it can't be done.

Practical solutions to put your family first

Modernizing health care and cutting wait times in Northern Ontario

Today, five million Canadians don't have a family doctor. One million are on waiting lists for care.

Nowhere is this more serious than in remote communities across the north where families find themselves driving many hours to get the health care they need.

At the same time, our families are getting older, essential drugs are more expensive, and for-profit private clinics are undermining our access to affordable, high quality health care.

Jack Layton and the Northern Ontario New Democrat Team will:

- Train an additional 28,000 nurses, doctors and other health professionals to cut wait times and improve health care services. Educational incentives will encourage in-demand professionals to serve in areas like ours where there are shortages.
- Expand the use of nurse practitioners and multi-disciplinary clinics to bring primary and timely health care to more communities.
- Support the Northern Ontario School of Medicine by expanding community placement opportunities at community health centres, hospitals and other health facilities across the North.
- Stop the spread of private for-profit clinics that provide service only to those who can afford it, and drain resources and staff from the public Medicare services that working families rely on.
- Cut the cost of the prescription drugs for your family by phasing in a Canada-wide Pharmacare program. This will include a national bulk-purchasing plan, with economies of scale that will save billions for provincial health care budgets.
- Ensure that you and your family can depend on the safety and quality of the food you eat. This means hiring sufficient food inspectors and guaranteeing immediate public notification of food safety problems.

Close to 90% of Northern Ontario doctors are not accepting new patients.

Source: College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, 2005.

Northern Ontario has far fewer specialists and doctors per person than Southern Ontario.

Source: Lakehead University study, 2008.

Creating good jobs and closing the affordability gap

Too many families across the North have received pink slips instead of pay cheques. Almost every community has been ripped apart by mill and plant closures as men and women watch their jobs move south or to China. Our daughters and sons should not be forced to leave their homes and communities to find work and raise a family.

Jack Layton and the Northern Ontario New Democrat Team will take action to keep good jobs in your community and get Northern Ontario working again. We will:

- Improve access to Employment Insurance. Currently only 40 percent of the unemployed actually qualify for benefits. We will also greatly expand training opportunities available through the EI program, including for employed workers and tradespeople seeking to upgrade their skills.
- Create and support sector-based strategies, such as mining exploration, lumber, pulp and paper, steel and telecommunications, to keep Canada and the men and women who work in Northern Ontario in a leading, global position.
- We will put Canadian jobs first by restricting imports from countries with unacceptable wage and environmental standards, and encouraging the manufacture of forest products here in Northern Ontario.
- Establish and increase funding for a stronger, community-driven stand-alone FedNor to ensure economic development funds stay in the North to create jobs for people in the North.
- Scrap the unfair 2007 Canada-U.S. Softwood Lumber agreement, re-open U.S. markets based on fair trade in lumber, and develop alternative markets.
- Build new markets for Canadian suppliers and encourage Canadian entrepreneurship by adopting a Made-in-Canada procurement policy for the federal government and its agencies.
- Immediately re-establish the federal minimum wage at \$10 an hour, indexed to inflation.
- Protect workers' pensions by establishing a Canadian Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund. This will ensure you actually receive the retirement benefits that you worked hard to earn, even if your employer goes out of business.
- Ban the use of replacement workers in strikes or lockouts.
- Recognize the reality facing many working families by providing up to six months of caregiver EI benefits while you care for an infirm or elderly family member.
- Protect jobs by appointing a Jobs Protection Commissioner to step in when there's a major layoff or shutdown, and work with workers, the employer, banks and community to maintain employment.

54% of Thunder Bay's manufacturing jobs have disappeared since 2002 (3,500).

Sudbury has lost 18% (900).

Source Statistics Canada

Reducing pollution and making big polluters pay their fair share

Families in Northern Ontario know the importance of a clean environment. You depend on fresh water, healthy forests and clean air to raise your family, build your home, for recreation and to sustain good jobs. The answer is not higher taxes for working families who already can't make ends meet. You don't need to be kicked harder where it hurts. The answer is to put sustainable jobs and sustainable communities first, and force polluters to clean up the mess they've made.

Jack Layton and the Northern Ontario New Democrat Team will tackle pollution and climate change, and create new opportunities for environmentally-friendly, family and community sustaining jobs. We will:

- Set hard limits on pollution and a tough charge on big polluters who exceed the limits. All revenue from making corporate polluters pay will be applied directly to environmental solutions that encourage individuals and businesses to make better choices for a clean environment.
- Introduce a comprehensive new Clean Water Act with tough enforceable standards for drinking water quality, starting with standards for First Nation reserves. All Canadians should have clean, safe water in their homes and communities.
- Build on the advantages of our natural riches in the North by creating a Green-Collar Jobs Fund to train new workers and displaced workers. This will give workers the skills to install and maintain energy efficiency and renewable energy technology. Northern Ontario should be a world leader in the development of clean, green energy from renewable sources like wind, solar, water and biomass.
- Provide low-interest loans and improved grants to make buildings and homes more energy efficient, through an extensive national home and building retrofit program. We will help families make the transition from unsustainable and expensive home heating fuels, like oil, to cleaner alternatives, and it pays for itself in lower costs.

Stronger and more affordable communities in Northern Ontario

It's time for a government that understands what it means to a working family in Northern Ontario when the cost of everything seems to keep rising, and the greed of big oil companies – already making record profits – drives up the price of gas you need to drive your children to school and get to work.

Jack Layton and the Northern Ontario New Democrat Team will strengthen our communities and protect your pocketbook. We will:

- Invest the equivalent of one cent of the GST (one of the five percent) to increase funding of the important priorities of our cities and towns. This will create local jobs improving our roads and highways (such as continuous twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway), expanding public transit, building affordable housing, creating new child care spaces, and investing in sewer, water treatment and community centres.
- Stop gas price gouging by creating an Ombudsperson who would investigate and prosecute

oil company collusion. We need a leader like Jack Layton who will stand up to big oil and their price gouging, not Stephen Harper who does nothing but give billions of our tax dollars to the very companies that are ripping us off.

- Ban ATM fees and cap the interest rate on credit cards.
- Stop the unfair extra charges by cell phone companies for text messages.
- From the existing federal gas tax, immediately dedicate one cent per litre specifically to transit. This will ensure permanent and stable funding of transit, including in Northern Ontario's larger communities. We will work to build needed regional public transit services in Northern Ontario.
- As requested by the Northern Ontario Large Urban Mayors, the New Democrats will:
 - Improve northern highways, assist with municipal road challenges and support the expansion of alternatives to road transportation
 - Establish an infrastructure renewal program that works for northern cities
 - Create a plan to enhance growth in our cities and our region
 - Reassume a greater share of costs for health and social services that have been downloaded onto the backs of property taxpayers

“Northern Ontario, as with every valuable asset, requires strategic investment and timely renewal.”

– Northern Ontario Large Urban Mayors

Honour and respect for First Nations peoples

First Nation communities have been ignored, disrespected, and let down by the promises of Liberal and Conservative governments of the past. Those promises haven't built decent homes with fresh drinking water, ensured a good education for Aboriginal children, or created the kinds of economic opportunities that would allow our First Nations to prosper from the richness of their lands' natural resources. There is much that must be done to restore the place of Aboriginal peoples within Canadian society, to right past wrongs, and to build a positive future based on respect for all peoples in Canada.

Jack Layton and the Northern Ontario New Democrat Team will build a new relationship with First Nation and Métis peoples. We will:

- Invest in water quality monitoring and enforceable standards to ensure all First Nation and Métis communities have clean and safe water.
- Improve health in First Nation and Métis communities by investing \$5 billion over five years on adequate housing, clean water, traditional healing, addiction treatment and other services.
- Implement aggressive new improvements in education and training for First Nations children, youth and adults. We will properly fund schools so First Nation children do not need to leave their families and communities to get an education comparable to other Canadian children. When 13-year-old Shannen Koostachin challenged the government to keep its commitment to build a school in Attawapiskat, she showed it can be done.
- Respect the right of First Nation communities to be consulted and to share in the natural resources from their traditional lands in order to participate fully in the Canadian economy.

