



13 May 2014

## **All Candidates Questionnaire**

Ontario Rivers Alliance (ORA) is a Not-for-Profit grassroots organization acting as a voice for the French River Delta Association, CPAWS-Ottawa Valley, Kiishik Community Association, Food & Water First, Whitewater Ontario, Vermilion River Stewardship, Friends of Grassy River, Mississippi Riverwatchers, French River Stewardship, as well as many other stewardships, associations, and private and First Nations citizens who have come together to protect, conserve and restore healthy river ecosystems all across Ontario.

ORA is concerned with all issues affecting Ontario rivers and their connecting wetlands, creeks, springs, and lakes. Our goal is to make significant change in a system which seems to have lost its vision of "*betterment*", environmental sustainability, and meaningful public and First Nation consultation and accommodation.

ORA is presenting you with this All Candidates Questionnaire to explore your party's policy and position on matters of importance to this organization. Your response is requested by the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June 2014. If a party does not respond to our questions, it will be interpreted as a "lack of interest in our concerns". All responses will be posted on ORA's website and circulated through social media. ORA is very grateful for your participation, and look forward to your party's response.

The latest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change points to a decline in water quality in Canada due to the combined impacts of climate change and development, with floods enhancing the potential for increased sediment, pollutants entering water supplies, and extreme precipitation leading to sewer-system overflow. The results, being seen across Canada, are increasingly tainted aquifers and nutrient-enriched lakes or drinking reservoirs where toxic algae growth is occurring – even in once pristine water bodies. Environmental scientists say deteriorating water quality is a looming crisis and a national strategy is needed to get all levels of government working together. There is, they say, "*no running away from a problem of such scope*".

As leader of your Party, if you form the next government:

1. Will you make protection and conservation of Ontario rivers, lakes and wetlands a high priority?
2. What would you do to protect, conserve and restore healthy river ecosystems in Ontario?



3. Environmental legislation, policies and processes have been streamlined and gutted to open the way for development and reduce government costs. This has threatened lake and river water quality, water quantity, habitat, fisheries, endangered species, navigability, public health and safety, and places many Ontario rivers at risk.
  - a. Would your government ensure environmental protection laws and rights are enforced, strengthened, and placed before corporate interests?
  - b. What would you do to restore confidence in government to protect freshwater ecosystems?
  - c. What would you do to ensure regulators are equipped to properly assess, monitor and ensure compliance of developments that impact on Ontario rivers?
4. There have been numerous scandals and hidden agendas within government.
  - a. How would you restore public confidence and trust in the provincial government?
  - b. What would you do to ensure an open, transparent, inclusive and accountable government?
5. Contracts for tailor-made studies that are designed to produce selective outcomes have been used to build public support for a political course of action. A common answer to the criticism is that "it was not within the scope of the study". If governments do not use integrity in all communications, then how can they expect corporations to?
  - a. What will you do to ensure integrity and honesty is your government's highest priority?
  - b. What will you do to ensure all the facts, both positive and negative, are considered and communicated in studies contracted by and relied upon by your government?
6. TransCanada's proposed Energy East Pipeline would carry highly toxic and corrosive tar sands bitumen across the Province for offshore export. This DilBit will offer little long-term benefit to the Province, would contribute to climate change, and when a spill occurs would place source drinking water and sensitive riverine ecosystems at risk.
  - a. Would you support or oppose the Energy East Pipeline crossing our Province when it will place 41 rivers, numerous wetlands and source drinking water at risk?
7. Ontario has a surplus of power, and is predicted to have a surplus of power until at least 2030. We all want to see a transition to truly green energy, but not at the expense of the environment, our democracy, or our public health and safety.
  - a. What would you do to ensure a green energy transition is smart, democratic, environmentally balanced, and economically and environmentally sustainable and responsible?
  - b. How would you reduce rising electricity prices?
8. Hydroelectric generation is promoted by our government as "clean" and "renewable" energy, when in fact this statement could not be further from the truth. Its highly cumulative negative effects on aquatic ecosystem are well documented. Riverine ecosystems and the citizens of Ontario will have to live with these effects for many decades.
  - a. What will you do to ensure the "Green Energy" label is used with integrity and fully reflects environmentally sound science and oversight?
  - b. Will you ensure sustainability and the precautionary approach are core considerations made when assessing the cumulative effects of waterpower proposals?



- c. Would you allow hydroelectric proposals that would have numerous environmental impacts to proceed through to approval?
  - d. Will you ensure that only environmentally friendly and responsible green and clean energy proposals are approved?
  - e. Will you ensure the negative effects of existing waterpower facilities are effectively mitigated?
9. Currently there are 48 proposed hydroelectric facilities moving through the approvals process in Ontario, and these proposals have FIT Contracts that guarantee 50% bonuses to produce power during peak demand hours. They cannot be told to stop generating, and get paid whether the power is needed or not.
  - a. Would you cancel the FIT contracts on those hydroelectric proposals that have not yet been approved?
  - b. Would you cancel the FIT contracts on hydroelectric projects that have already been approved?
10. Privatization of Ontario rivers and lakes is happening through the transfer of Crown Land to private corporations for the purposes of hydroelectric development. These projects impact on water quality, water quantity, place public health and safety at serious risk, and take control of many kilometers of river and lake ecosystems.
  - a. Do you support this policy?
  - b. How would you protect the public's right to safe access and navigability of river systems?
  - c. What would you do to protect fresh water and aquatic ecosystems?
  - d. What would you do to protect public health and safety?
  - e. Would you give municipalities the power to say no to green energy proposals that would impact on them?
  - f. Would you ensure our public utility, Ontario Power Generation, has first option on any new potential hydroelectric allotment and site?
11. In order to make "small hydro" economically feasible on small rivers with lower flows, developers use harmful cycling and peaking operating strategies to maximize power generation. Many kilometres of river are at risk for a very small amount of power.
  - a. Would you continue to allow new hydro facilities to be built when we have a surplus of power?
  - b. Would you allow small hydro developments under 10 MW?
12. We currently have a proponent-led EA process that puts the "fox in charge of the hen house", and is clearly is not working to protect the environment. It has undermined stakeholder trust and confidence in the entire EA process.
  - a. What will you do to rectify this?
  - b. Will you eliminate the proponent led process?
  - c. Will you ensure that MNR and MOE lead and direct the approvals and permitting process instead of the developer?
13. The Environmental Commissioner of Ontario (ECO) has pointed out many deficiencies and problems with the environmental assessment process, and the effectiveness and integrity of government policies and processes. The ECO has reported that "Ontario's EA process is broken", and "a no decision is not a possible outcome". Little has been done to address these issues.



- a. What will you do to ensure the EA process is strengthened and effective?
  - b. Would you provide the ECO with the power to make positive change to environmental legislation, policy and process?
14. Over the last 15 years in Ontario there have been over 50 Part II Order requests to elevate a Class Environmental Assessment (EA) to a more rigorous Individual EA, but none have ever been granted by the Minister of Environment.
- a. What will you do to ensure integrity is restored to this crucial process?
15. The United Nation's Millennium Ecosystem Approach assesses the consequences of ecosystem change for human well-being, and the scientific basis for action needed to enhance the conservation and sustainable use of those systems and their contribution to human well-being. It places a value on ecosystem services and the benefits they provide to human well-being.
- a. Will you enshrine the United Nations Millennium Ecosystem Approach into the province's Environmental Assessment and approvals process?
16. Currently fish passage is not required at hydroelectric dams operating in Ontario.
- a. Will you ensure safe and effective upstream and downstream fish passage is mandatory at every new or upgraded dam site in Ontario?
17. The ecological benefits of dam removal are widely recognized to improve water quality and restore fisheries.
- a. Would you undertake a review of the ecological harm inflicted by impoundments, dams, and weirs throughout Ontario?
  - b. Would you encourage removal of dams which no longer serve any useful purpose and that place public safety at risk?
18. Dam Decommissioning provisions are currently not required for developers to secure funds up-front for future decommissioning and removal of hydroelectric dams. Instead, the cost is left to the taxpayers to pay for MNR to maintain, and for unsafe dams to be removed.
- a. Would you ensure developers/operators are required to secure funds up-front for future dam decommissioning and removal – as is the case in the mining industry?

Respectfully,

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