

October 6, 2008

**RE: OCASI Questionnaire**

Attached please find the response of Canada's New Democrats to your 2008 Election questionnaire. It is the policy of our party to respond on behalf of all New Democrat candidates.

To find out more, we encourage you to consult: [www.ndp.ca](http://www.ndp.ca)

Thank you for your interest in the views of Canada's New Democrats on the critical issues facing Canadians.

We appreciate your efforts to help voters make an informed decision on voting day.

Sincerely,



Jack Layton  
Leader of Canada's New Democrats

## **Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants** **2008 Election Questionnaire**

### Immigrant Settlement and Integration

1. Jack Layton and his team of New Democrats will increase financial support for the settlement process for new Canadians to assist with literacy, community integration and orientation, including bridging, mentorship, English-as-a-second-language (ESL) programs and resource service centres. We will also significantly increase resources and support for immigration processes to reduce the huge and unacceptable backlogs that currently exist in processing applications, work to meet Canada's target of annual immigration (1 percent of population), and establish firm targets for on-time completion of family class and spousal sponsorships.

### Labour Market Integration

2. Jack Layton and the New Democrats have been advocating for this funding. We feel that releasing the funds earmarked from the Canada-Ontario Labour Market Partnership Agreement would have provided greater fairness and opportunities for working immigrant families.

### Immigration

3. Jack Layton and his team of New Democrats will immediately implement the provision in the Immigration Act for a refugee appeal division to help facilitate a fair refugee hearing and determination process, and ensure that all vacancies on the Immigration Refugee Board are filled in a fair and transparent manner.

4. Jack Layton and his team of New Democrats will allow people without status who are living in Canada the opportunity to apply for legal status. We will also accelerate and streamline the recognition of foreign credentials, overseas degrees and previous employment experience in conjunction with provinces and licensing authorities. New Democrats will also review the point system used to assess new applications to match the reality of work in Canada, including specific provisions for blue-collar workers and tradespeople.

5. As stated in question 1, Jack Layton and his team of New Democrats will significantly increase resources and support for immigration processes to reduce the huge and unacceptable backlogs that currently exist in processing applications, work to meet Canada's target of annual immigration (1 percent of population), and establish firm targets for on-time completion of family class and spousal sponsorships. We will also stop the decline in family reunification, and maximize the economic and social advantages of family stability.

In addition to the above measures, New Democrats will implement the New Democrats' *Once In a Lifetime* bill to expedite sponsorship of one family member as a new Canadian.

6. In addition to making it easier for people living in Canada to apply for status in Canada, Jack Layton and his team of New Democrats will eliminate landing fees for new immigrants, as well as processing fees for refugees and people fleeing torture and domestic violence. We will also properly regulate immigration consultants to stop abuse of immigrants and potential immigrants, and crack down on unscrupulous and illegal activities. New Democrats will also eliminate discrimination against people with disabilities in admission processes. We will continue to ensure that all new Canadians have access to the 'core' immigration system, rather than expand the Liberal-Conservative temporary "guest worker" and "live-in caregiver" programmes. These programmes deny basic employee rights, do not allow application for immigration, and result in longer delays in the entire system.

#### Racialization of Poverty

7. Jack Layton and his team of New Democrats are committed to the eradication of poverty in Canada. We feel that no Canadian should live in poverty. New Democrats will:

- Introduce a Poverty Elimination Act to eliminate poverty in Canada by the year 2020. This act will set firm targets, and make the government accountable for achieving these targets by 2020. The act will include the following:
  - Every five years the government will have to report on its progress and deliver an action plan, to be approved by the House of Commons.
  - Initial targets will include reducing child poverty by more than 50 percent and the overall poverty rate by more than 35 percent in the first five years.
  - Establishment of a poverty elimination office housed within HRDC to assume overall responsibility for implementing our poverty-reduction strategy and developing concrete poverty indicators.

To help families make ends meet – and to reach out to children living in poverty, New Democrats will:

- Phase in a new Child Benefit. This benefit, modelled on the existing Canada Child Tax Benefit, will expand in phases to \$5000 a year per child, and consolidate the current piecemeal system of benefits and tax credits for children into a single, better, non-taxable monthly cheque to parents.
- Work with provinces to eliminate the provincial claw-back of much needed Child Supplement Benefits for families receiving social assistance.
- Make substantial investments in affordable, accessible, child care for all Canadians.

- Provide aggressive incentives to help ordinary families and those with low or fixed incomes become more energy-efficient, helping you to both reduce your rising energy costs and contribute to the fight against climate change.
- Establish a fair minimum wage of \$10 and index it to inflation.
- Immediately reform the Employment Insurance system to ensure fairness and support for unemployed Canadians.
- Institute a “Bring Canada Home” affordable housing plan.
- Improve workplace standards and protect workers’ pensions.
- Expand literacy and skills training.

### Human Rights

8. Jack Layton and his team of New Democrats are committed to human rights and anti-racism. We feel that the draconian Anti-Terrorism Act, which was written by Liberals and opposed by the NDP, and has already impeded media freedom in Canada should be scrapped and replaced with legislation that respects civil liberties, ethnic communities and freedom of the press. We also feel that racial profiling should be banned from federal departments and jurisdictions.

New Democrats also fought the cuts to Status of Women Canada, the cancellation of funding to advocacy groups, and the removal of the word equality in the funding mandate. New Democrats are committed to achieving gender equality in Canada. New Democrats also commit to :

- Improve fairness for women at work:
  - Implement full pay equity in the federal public service, and strengthen pay equity provisions in the Canada Labour Code for workers in federal jurisdiction covered by the Code and called for by the Pay Equity Task Force.
  - Raise the minimum wage to \$10 per hour and index it to inflation.
  - Increase access to Employment Insurance for women, and improve parental and maternity benefits.
  - Institute a national child care program.
- Help stop violence against women:
  - Restore funds cut by Liberal governments throughout the 1990s for shelters and transition houses for women who are victims of domestic violence.
  - Support native women’s efforts to develop healing centres and educational and training opportunities, including those that target the root causes of violence and violence directed at sex trade workers.
  - Build more affordable housing to assist women trying to escape violence.
  - Re-institute the annual consultation between the Department of Justice and women’s groups to monitor progress on ending violence against women, and progress on improving women’s access to the justice system and legal services.

- Empower Status of Women Canada and other appropriate federal agencies to work to implement the recommendations of the report on Canada by the UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.
- Support Stephen Lewis' call for international action on women's equality. Work for the creation of a UN Women's Agency to ensure that women's voices and concerns are represented at the highest levels of the international community.
- Reaffirm women's right to safe therapeutic abortion services.
- Properly fund Status of Women Canada, re-investing in women's programs and organizations who had their funding cut by the Harper government.
- Re-open regional Status of Women offices and strengthen their mandate to achieve equality for women.

Other steps we will take to defend human rights are:

- Immediately ratify the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We will reverse the Conservative government's refusal to sign the Declaration. We will ensure its provisions are properly respected in Canada and incorporated into Canadian law.
- Restore the court challenges program, eliminated by the Harper government, which funded equality seeking groups to go to court to protect their rights and establish a fair jurisprudence.
- Work with affected multicultural communities to appropriately redress historical issues arising from governmental actions, including options such as recognition of wrongdoing, official apologies, and compensation.
- Work with the trade union movement to ensure full respect for labour rights in Canada, including for non-Canadians working legally here as well as for workers in Canadian-owned industries abroad.
- Immediately implement the United Nations Convention on The Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- Amend the Canadian Human Rights Act to include gender identity and gender expression and identity among the prohibited grounds for discrimination. Support gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans-gender and transexual equality internationally, as per the Montreal and Jakarta Declaration on Human Rights.

9. New Democrat Leader Jack Layton sent a letter to the Secretary General of the United Nations outlining conditions for Canadian participation at the World Conference Against Racism. New Democrat Advocate on Human Rights and Multiculturalism Wayne Marston has written a letter to Jason Kenney, Secretary of State for Multiculturalism, urging the Government of Canada to reconsider its decision to not attend the 2009 Durban Review and our Foreign Affairs critic Paul Dewar sent a similar letter to Foreign Affairs Minister David Emerson.

New Democrats are a party that is committed to fighting racism in all its forms and we celebrate the ongoing efforts of the UN and the global community to work together to tackle this issue.

New Democrats believe that it is in Canada's best interests to contribute actively to all bodies of the United Nations and we feel that Canada must re-establish the international credibility it has lost as a result of the Conservative government's acts of international disengagement. Above all, we believe that Canada must be engaged in the worldwide fight to combat racism – including implementing Canada's Action Plan Against Racism so that we can, in the words of the Action Plan, "move closer to realizing a shared vision for a truly inclusive society."

We also believe that the UN owes it to the world to create a forum in which global voices can be heard in a common effort to counter and root out racism, wherever it lurks. Some of the goals identified through the first WCAR, held in Durban, South Africa, were laudable and would go a long way towards eradicating racism.

Some participants' comments and behaviour at the first WCAR and at meetings earlier this year crossed the line of what is acceptable, and others' were inflammatory and frankly hateful. While we feel that the issue of combating racism is vitally important to our shared global community, we simply and categorically cannot accept that a second conference be a forum for hateful and libellous outbursts. Such a conference would do nothing to advance our fight. Rather, it would constitute a big step back. However, instead of throwing up our hands and boycotting the event, Canada should put to use our remaining international credibility and influence to help find a more inclusive and constructive approach.

New Democrats understand that there is important work to be done to combat racism. We believe that Canada has a responsibility to develop a comprehensive plan to implement the commendable goals identified through some of the recommendations contained in the Durban Declaration and Program of Action.