

OFAH Leader's Survey – Derek Sloan, Leader of the Ontario Party

- 1. Will you increase Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry's (NDMNRNF) Fish & Wildlife budget by increasing Consolidated Revenue Fund investments to match the contributions anglers, hunters, and trappers make through the Fish & Wildlife Special Purpose Account?**

Hunters & anglers are vital to the well-being of our great outdoors, and an Ontario Party government would invest appropriately in the Fish and Wildlife budget with this in mind. Some of the greatest conservationists are those who fish and hunt; they develop a close relationship to the land.

By enhancing funding opportunities in Ontario for fishing and hunting, we can ensure better conservation, and by growing the heritage sports of angling and hunting we are creating a new generation of conservationists and helping support our tourist industry across the province that so heavily depends on angling and hunting.

- 2. If elected, what concrete actions will your government take to promote fishing and hunting, and enhance the recruitment, retention, and reactivation of anglers and hunters in Ontario?**

As the Leader of the Ontario Party, I am personally an avid sport shooter and outdoor enthusiast, and to me it's extremely important that the next generation has the opportunity to experience the outdoors just as we did growing up – and I believe we have a real opportunity to expand interest in fishing and hunting by launching special rural-urban exchange programs designed to get youth out of high density urban zones and into the wilderness of Ontario to experience hunting and fishing first-hand. We would greatly rely on the assistance of organizations like OFAH to make such an endeavor a success!

Hunting and fishing are time-honoured traditions in our province; The Ontario Party would work with industry stakeholders like OFAH to ensure we are tailoring our programs to spark a new renaissance for our outdoors here in Ontario. We are blessed with bountiful resources, so we should also be teaching conservation to our youth so we can continue to enjoy some of the most abundant hunting and fishing grounds of anywhere in the world.

- 3. What infrastructure investments will you make that will improve accessibility to the outdoors for the people of Ontario? (i.e., access to Crown land roads, public boat launches and parking, and fishing access points).**

An Ontario Party government will ensure that access to Crown Land roads is improved as much as possible, and we would work with municipalities to create more public boat launches and parking, as well as publicly accessible fishing access points (like community-run special zones on major waters, with special funding available and managed through groups like OFAH.) We will also maintain existing public access points as well, as they are under threat right now.

4. Please outline what specific investment or policy actions you would take to support fishing and hunting, and fish and wildlife conservation in Ontario?

Hunters and anglers care about the outdoors and go to great lengths to ensure they enjoy these recreational pastimes in a responsible way – we must instill this respect for the outdoors in our youth and expose others to the excitement that comes with angling and hunting. So, specialized programs targeting youth to get them outdoors would be key.

We also need to maintain and expand access to publicly available fishing spots; this will be accomplished through public/private projects.

Focus is continually needed to address the issue of invasive species, and the Ontario Party would greatly enhance existing measures on invasive species management to further protect and conserve our incredible resources for hunting and angling. Although not an invasive species, we would also heavily invest in a strategy to combat CWD in cervid species, since the issue appears to be getting worse and we have a lot of concern with how bad it could get here in Ontario that we have heard from the hunting community as well as concerned biologists.

5. Would you commit to investing in the OFAH-NDMNRF programs at levels that are equal to or greater than what is occurring now?

Given the level of debt & deficit spending incurred by the Ford government (and the Liberals before him) the first order of business would be to strategically review all government spending to attempt to get our deficit in order; however the promise would be to maintain equal funding across the board for all OFAH-NDMNRF programming, given the huge importance of these programs to the future wellbeing of our outdoors, for all hunters and anglers across the province. I promise we would maintain funding, with an eye towards increasing it if possible, following a deficit reduction review mechanism.