SPEAKER: Hello, everybody. There we go. Hello, everybody. My name is Fiona Yeudall and I'm the director of the center for studies in Food Security here at Ryerson and it is my pleasure to welcome you all to Ryerson University today in this very busy run-up to the very exciting provincial election, and for an opportunity to discuss a topic near and dear to the hearts of the people in the center for studies in food security and I hope you - food. At Ryerson we start our meetings with the Ryerson land acknowledgement and in the spirit of my role as a settler, and I hope an ally, I wish to acknowledge that Toronto is in the Dish With One Spoon Territory, the Dish With One Spoon is a treaty between the Anishinaabe, Mississaugas and Haudenosaunee that bound them to share the territory and protection the land. Subsequent indigenous nations and peoples, Europeans and all newcomers have been invited into this treaty in the spirit of peace, friendship and respect.

If you wish to learn more about why we do the land acknowledgement and the history of it, please see the section on Ryerson's website by the Aboriginal Education Council, which explains the impetus for the land acknowledgement and, if you want to see what Ryerson is doing in response to the truth and reconciliation commission's call for action, you can look on our equity and community inclusion section of our website to learn more.

So, without further ado, I am going to turn the podium over to Steve Fielding, who is a Debby Field who is with us for the next two years and can I say the instigator behind this event. So thank you, everyone, for coming. #34r5us

[APPLAUSE]

DEBBIE FIELD: We're delighted that you came out and we think we're going to have a really important conversation about food policy.

Elections are always times when we can think about what our government is going to do and I personally believe that what governments do a what social movements and community organisations ask them to do. So there is quite a complex process of the issues that need to be raised, the solutions that could happen and what politicians then do.

So today's meeting is one of the many steps in that process. And we're pretty happy that we have a Green and an NDP leapt representative. We wish we had a Liberal and conservative representative but at this time when everyone is canvassing it's complicated.

We started this meeting about a month ago, we thought we needed to be done, was the number of groups who got interested. So we actually have 18 groups that are here today. Which is pretty amazeing. The Ryerson, Sustain Ontario, the Toronto Food Policy Council and the Black creek community farm, Toronto Food Policy Council, Meal Etch change, Toronto urban growers, the Ryerson studentses Union, good food, Ryerson democratic and engagement exchange, St Jon John's community lab, the Ryerson learning centerand though they don't have their logo representatives of the Ontario.

One of the things that we will see as we bring our our six questioners up is how complex food is about the policy levers that the Ontario government has. So we changed our format a bit. We will have each of our six questioners come up and allow two of the political parties who are here to answer and we will have time for a couple of questions and hopefully see a little bit about what we can all do to make sure that everyone in Ontario has better access to healthy, affordable local food.

So our first question is from Keith Curry, who is from a very important organization in Ontario. So pretty amazing, Keith, that you can join us. Thanks.

KEITH CURRY: Thank you. As an 8th generation farmer, proudly an 8th generation farmer, also proudly to represent farmers across the province, I'm also excited to see you folks taking an interest in what is near and dear to my heart and thank you to the representatives of the party to be here today to answer some of the questions that are important to us when we're making a decision 10 days from now as to who will lead the province.

Most of you here probably won't realize that the industry of agriculture not only is the number one industry in this province but the number one employer. Nearly 830,000 jobs come because of the agricultural food industry. That is important to me as a farmer because I know if it's healthy behind the farm gate I know, that behind the farm gate is healthy as well. So someone involved in food production I need to know that that pror for me is -- support for me is beyond the farm gate door. What are your parties willing to do, to commit to, to maintain that we maintain that distributed economic development across for our farmers to be pros Parliament House and -- prosperous, and in turn for our agricultural food industry to be prosperous and maintain that high employment status and create more jobs and essentially lead to prosperity of the Ontario economy?

DEBBIE FIELD: Our second question is from scar scar scar, from community food centers of Canada. Thankyous..

DEBBIE FIELD: So, as community Food Centers Canada, we work with partner organizations to build community food centers to support the community food sector as a whole. In our group we see many low income people who are struggling to get by and among those many on social assistance. We know that the biggest predictor of food insurt is poverty and income security and we'd like to know from you today your position on the basic income pilot, whether you would continue it and what you would anticipate doing should the outcome show that basic income is having a positive impact, which I think primarily it's showing.

Secondly, what would you do to implement the recommendations of the income security reform working group, which came out recently, and include including social assistance rates which no party seems to want to own, making essential health benefits available to all low income people and improving social assistance rules to make it easier for people to work. Thank you.

DEBBIE FIELD: Our next question is Leticia Leigh of the Black Creek Community Farm and the Toronto Food Policy Council, one of the sponsors of today.

LETICIA DEAWUO: So the Black Creek community farm is a project in Jane and Finch. We have food projects, so I had a couple of questions for the candidates. So what will your party do to help make sure that racial lives and indigenous people are food secure? And the other part to my question is does your party have a position on funding small-scale or community-based farming project and also what is your party's position on supporting racial lives, indigenous -- racialized indigenous farmers in Ontario? Thank you.

DEBBIE FIELD: Our next question is Lynn Roblin, who is a dietitian and senior policy consultant at Ontario Public Health Association and board member of the Sustain.

LYNN ROBLIN: Good afternoon, everyone. And thank you to the candidates representatives for showing up today. So I 'm the co chair of the Ontario Food and Nutrition Strategy Group that worked on a five-year process to put together a strategy to help advise what are some of our policy priorities here in Ontario for food and farming to promote a healthy food system, resilient food system and also to promote the health of Ontarians. And our key areas of focus are around food access, food security. Also around food literacy and a healthy, robust food system supporting Ontario and Ontario farmers. So my question is - do you think it's time for the government to have an advisory council in the form possibly of an Ontario Food policy Council to support some cross ministry, stake holder work in this area? And we raise this as an attention because we see a lot of ministries doing work in sillos, Minister of agricultural food, ministry of health, education and environment and others. And we feel to have an impactful food policy here in Ontario it needs to be collaborative and cross-ministry and informed by multiple stake holders. So thank you very much for addressing that question.

[APPLAUSE]

DEBBIE FIELD: Our next question is from Erica Gray from the Tyendinagas Mowhawk Territory and the Ojibiikaan indigenous network, thank you for coming.

ERICA GRAY: So I am here on behalf of the Ojibiikaan Indigenous Cultural Network which is a new food sovereignty and cultural non-profit here in Toronto, that we started to address the gaps in indigenous food sovereignty programming in the city, especially for children, youth and families.

Indigenous food sovereignty and food security are really significant pieces of the continuing truth and reconciliation process. To heal our communities and to improve health and well-being out comes especially for our children in youth. So much of our traditional ecological and agricultural knowledge was lost and suppressed through colonisation and our food systems are now physically and economically inaccessible to our people in most areas. Because we're currently unable to sustain ourselves from the land as we once did, we are forced to rely on conventional foods found in grocery stores which means eating a diet that is vastly different from our traditional diet.

When we then see the impacts on our health through increased risk of obesity and its related health conditions, like diabetes and heart disease. High rates of poverty in our communities mean healthy food is even more inaccessible and - sorry. It's even more inaccessible and families either lack food altogether or subsist on low quality processed foods. These issues are exacerbated in remote and northern communities where we hear of impossible food prices especially for the fresh nutritious foods that our bodies need. How will your bodies support the indigenous peoples and their food sovereignty.

DEBBIE FIELD: And our last question is from Paul Taylor, executive director of Food Policy Council Toronto.

PAUL TAYLOR: It's still on. Hi, hello. Good afternoon! My name is Paul, I work at Food Policy Council, a place they've quickly come to realize is one of the most remarkable places on the earth but I won't bore you with that. You know, I work with some incredible people and in addition to the incredible people that I work with I work with some really incredible volunteers an over the last couple of weeks I got to sit with some of our volunteers who are committed to making sure that kids have food to eat to start their day. These folks beamed with pride when we were able to get together and celebrate our accomplishments. Food Policy Council is a partnership, as it 's involved in a partnership that supports over 204,000 kids and youth in the city of Toronto to access either breakfast or an early morning male. Really important to -- meal. Really important to me and to those kids. My question for the two of you - how will your party continue and expand Ontario student nutrition programs and school food literacy. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

DEBBIE FIELD: I in some ways don't envy our two folks who get to respond to this. So I guess - do you want - you are our candidates, right. So on behalf of the Green party, please come up and tell us what you think - actually, you can stay right there. You're perfect. Thank you so much. Great. And take about five or six minutes and then we will have some time for discussion.

SPEAKER: So thank you very much for inviting the Green Party to this event. Food is magical. And which want to thank you everybody that put this together. We come here as a Green Party with the Dish With One Spoon in mind. We understand that we need to take care of the soil, the water and the air because that's directly tied in with our food.

So let's make that space available for us to have this conversation. And these are some very important questions and I think a little bit of background on me might be helpful to you guys. The leader of the Green Party, he suggested that I come down here. My riding is Scarborough Park and my name is Priyan De Silva and I consider myself an urban farmer so this is a really good opportunity. So let's get back into the economy right now. The first question is local farm and food economy.

So the Green Party of Ontario understands how important the soil is and our farmers are to our communities. So we want to make sure that we give them their fair share when that happens. So if the farmers are taking the carbon out of the soil and making sure that we have healthy, local, organic food, nutrient dense food, we need to make sure they get paid or the that. So we have a model in our policy which ensures that $200 million will be left there for these farmers and people who work with the land to get fees for what they do to help clean our air, to help grow our food and this's all over Ontario.

And the way we finance that, as we transition from an extractive economy to a renewable energy economy, we ensure that that extraction is taxed fairly. So that's the overall process and I'll go through each one and hopefully we can have another conversation.

Income security, we do advoeivate for basic income guarantee. We understand that in this transitioning economy and our social architecture right now is changing and in our society we believe that we need to help out the people who need the most help, who are most marginalised and outside our mainstream society. With we wish to expand the basic income guarantee pilot project, starting with the ODSP and recipient s and the 75% low income measure and add another $6,000 to that at the end of the four years, so that's about 20,000 for ODSP. We want to make sure that everyone is treated fairly and people who are able to skill help out society in this transition should be taken care of.

For food justice, there's a lot of individuals in Scarborough-Rouge Park that are food insecure and the models we've been using are community garden, advocating for soil quality ensure ing that water is available for everybody so they can grow and it's also a social model where we try to ensure that people who are socially isolated come together in that space and the Green Party of Ontario advocates for the protection of our soil, our water and these types of social systems. And, again, we can get down into specifics at low level and policy level at that.

The Ontario Food Policy Council, we have worked with the youth - the Toronto Food Policy Council to work for resources like food by (unknown term) which is a great way to use the assets in our communities and share that knowledge and we want to make sure that those types of programs continue to expand to an Ontario level for sure.

Whether - it's always time to talk to communities about how we can access food in a better way and in an Ontario Food Policy Council is something that we're actually talking about within our own individual communities all the way from Sudbury down to the greater Toronto area. We believe in the discipline one spoon, we really have to take care of our food. We have the green belt that needs to be protected. We have our blue belt, the water, that needs to be &ed into our -- added into our blue belt protection Act and this is something that's happened before we were here and it should continue to happen long after we've gone.

And the student nutrition program, yes, we do want to expand that. There is a lot of transitioning happening in our communities and we can go through the policies and how to fund these things but these are just the over arching ideas that we have. We have the policies and if there's specific questions about that we can go through that. But it's important to understand that the future generations' health is based on the food that they have. We understand that the health effects 10, 15, 20 years from now are based on the food that they have access to today. So that is a very important piece. Thank you.

DEBBIE FIELD: Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

DEBBIE FIELD: Our next party is the Ontario New democratic Party and we have Mary Rita Holland, who is the President of the Ontario New democratic Party. She is also a city counselor in Kingston. So thank you for coming.

MARY RITA HOLLAND: Hi, everybody, thank you so much to all the groups who are here today and to the organizers for having us. As Debbie mentioned I'm the President of the Ontario NDP which I guess I've been in this role since 2014. I did run for the New democratic Party twice in 2011 and 2014, I came in second both times, but this time around I'm a volunteer. And am now on City Council. I am also a member as part of my role I am a member of our board of health, so the Kingston (unknown term) public health and my PhD work is in health studies and kinesiology at Queens. I teach a course, so this is an area that I'm more familiar with in my off time when I'm not doing politics but it's all related which is why we're all here.

I will start off with Keith's question regarding the farming economy. There are a number of areas in our platform that are relevant to supporting rural residents in general but specifically with an emphasis on making sure we have a vibrant farm economy. So the first step of course is to protect the farm land. We have a policy that will be ensuring preservation of prime agricultural land for the purposes of food production, not for development.

We also would like to, upon forming government, begin with an Ontario food strategy which would mean talking to all of you stake holders and others, putting together what Lynn I think mentioned as a way forward that kind of crosses all of the various levels of government when it comes to food and food production and income security of course.

We will increase the cap on risk management, understanding of course that our farmers need to protection and especially for the younger farmers if they want to begin in that as a lifestyle and an industry and they want to secure investments that they would need to have assurance that the government of Ontario would be there to support them in times of difficulty, financial or other aspects of the global economy.

We also would be supportive of forms of alternative energy such as converting farm waste into biogas, that is something that we could feed into our grid and, of course, as many of you may know, the cost of hydrois something that really people across the province are concerned with these day, particularly in northern and rural communities. So it's our plan to reduce the cost of hydro by 30% and also to ensure that we have rural broadband, so we have a fund of $1 billion to invest in the rural broadband so making sure that those who choose to live and work in smaller communities, particularly farming, have access to the technology and the infrastructure that they need.

In terms of income security, this is an area that is my personal interest area in my research, the answer to the question, Kathryn, two questions - the answers, yes, and yes. So we do support - we do support all of the - we support the recommendations and would like to work forward on what has been brought forward by the commission for the review of social assistance and also we support continuing the guaranteed annual income pilot project.

We have, as part of our platform, some measures that would develop these policies right away, beginning with an increase in Ontario works rates, and ODSP, and in fact it is our intention, as is part of the recommendations, that we sort of do a total repurpose and renaming of those programs as many of you know they are punitive, they are damaging in many, many ways and of course the rates themselves have not lent themselves to people living healthy, dignified lives in these provinces.

The increases, OW, quite significantly 10%, then 7 then 5. Also, the ODSP rates would increase by 5% and we would increase the amount of income that persons receiving ODSP are able to earn while receiving those benefits.

I've had the opportunity to work as an employment counselor with many who are hefing ODSP and at that threshold of wanting to go back to work and it's one of the heart wrenching things to see someone who has been on ODSP as an example and living in isolation and wanting to work and get involved in the community more and being held back by the clawback that's involved.

Of course we're supportive of a minimum wage of at least $15 an hour and we would index that to inflation. We want to increase the amount of affordable housing and supportive housing. The - in terms of affordability for post-secondary students, we - I've been in school a long time. This is my second PhD, the first one did not get completed but mostly because of politics. So really it's just my first one! Loads of student debt: So our plan is to take - to turn those loans into grants, pay back interest that those of you who had the misfortune of having to pay the student loans so far have had to pay and we know that post secondary students are some of the most food insecure in the country at the moment, so we're hoping that some of these initiatives will help with that.

We also want to see - this is addressing Leticia's point on community food. We do want, as a provincial government, we have the capacity to work with our schools, our hospitals, our municipalities and other organizations that we fund to encourage them to first of all bring in local food producers and to encourage them to incorporate local food in their operations. We in Kingston have had the really serious misfortune of losing local food provider in the hospital, the effects have been really damaging and so those are the types of things that we would reverse by bringing community food agencies sort of back into the food production, food provision aspects of our pop sessions - operations as a provincial government.

In terms of minorities and our support for, we do of course acknowledge that there are individuals who are living - who are a marginalised experience in general in this province. We have an anti-racism fund of about $20 million per year to continually address some of the issues that - that racialized and marginalised groups face. And of course how that would be spent would be determined by the organizations involved and the community groups who are interested. I guess, I'll loop that in as well with the indigenous food security and food sovereignty issue, Erica, and, on that note, we have developed a first nations health action plan of about 209 million dollars annually and the intention of this is to make sure that the funds are there and make sure that we're listening to first nations leaders when it comes to how that money would be spent.

Some of the things that we can imagine that would improve health outcomes and food security and sovereignty would be greater - well, preservation and protection of water and food, to begin with, and moving on from there having greater access to disease prevention, physicians in rural and remote communities and supports for traditional healing and cultural sensitivity in our programs available for seniors and for children.

We also would be supporting midwifery and maternal care in indigenous communities. I'm losing track of my questions. I will go now to the food curriculum.

The - this is an interesting one. My supervisor at Queen's works on food security and we've recently gone through, we're not quite there yet but I think I can say that we have co authored a paper on why Canada has never developed a school lunch program. We know that there's a need. In Canada, we have gone the route of income support as opposed to food programs to assist families and children in schools. There's a lot of reasons for that. But, essentially, as time has gone on and as we've had liberal and Conservative governments cut those income security programs we have seen hold households in general become more food insecure and therefore children as they go to school suffer that same fate.

So to that end, we are interested in a curriculum review. We are interested in a food curriculum touching on the growing and the preparation of food. But rather than sort of bring something like that forward, our overall plan at this point is to do as we have a curriculum review kind of on our plan, just an entire review of the entire curriculum that would be the first step, and then we would introduce any new programming at that time.

But we would also make sure we review the funding formula so that we have not only a curriculum but we have the resources required to implement the curriculum in the school system.

Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

DEBBIE FIELD: Thank you, Mary Rita. That's amazing. So we now have an opportunity for you to ask some questions. But before that, I want to also tell you a bit about what's going on the side here and also encourage you to participate in it with us. Probably at 3:00 because I think the good news is that we are doing this in a very efficient way and it looks like even after a robust conversation we probably will be done at 3 instead of 4.

When we set ourselves the goal of having this meeting, we had two goals and I think you will agree with me that the first goal we're also doing a pretty good job of meeting, which is to get out the issues that we think should be addressed in the provincial election around food. And through these six questions and your answers, I think we can see that there's lots that can be done at the Ontario level, at the food policy level, and the integration of these six themes I think allows us to look hopefully to the future.

But our second theme was to try to see if we could convince as many people in the Ryerson community and especially Ryerson students to vote. So this is a little button that says "vote", and here's some registered and I'm getting ready for election day, and one of the great things that's going on the campus here and I'm sure on campuses everywhere is a real attempt to have conversations with studentses about why it's important that they vote. I am sure that the vast majority of undecided voters in Ontario right at this moment are under 30.

And as we know from elections, it tends to be unfortunately people over 55 who tends to always vote, regardless. And that always skews things in terms of what is in fact a majority view in any province at any time.

So we've got all kinds of materials over here. And there's a really exciting movement on campus here to encourage students and so we actually have a pretend ballot and we actually hoped that you will all participate. You don't have to be a Ryerson student and we have six questions and a potential other one which is income security, adequate income to buy food, farmland prosperity, sustainable agrifood sector that supports food and the hand land, food justice, you can vote for that. Ontario Food Policy Council, a joined up approach to food democracy, you can vote for that. Food sovereignty, community controlled indigenous food systems, student nutrition, school meals and food literacy for students or others and we will tab youlate them -- tabulate them and release them later.

In a fairly good group I think there's about 100 of us here in the room, so that will be interesting to see. Now, we don't have a mic there but you can come up here. Does anyone want to come up and ask a question? Come on up. You can. The problem is it won't be - I'll have to repeat it. Maybe stand up at least and, wait, there's a mic. Perfect. Thank you. Maybe your name if you feel like it or not if you don't.

QUESTION: So my question is we've talked a little bit about access and equity in the community. Can both of you speak to how your parties will identify and recognize the changes needed to the seasonal agricultural workers program? Thank you.

DEBBIE FIELD: Anybody got anything on that?

PRIYAN DE SILVA: Well, specifically it's the - the economy is changing and food is a big part of that. Currently, the model where we have food that is grown at economies of scale are not going to be as efficient for Ontarians as possible. It's one of those things that are changed to decentralised models and one way that the Green Party of Ontario sees that and I hope we take into the social aspects of the seasonal agricultural programs is there's a current small business program of 3.9 - sorry, 3.9 million dollars and 36% of that currently goes to small businesses. And we want to ensure that all of them go to businesses that are both responsible in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and one of the way we do that is we decentralize our food model which means we change the way we look at how we have access to food and that seasonal agriculture becomes a way that we use the resources that we already have, such as greenhouses that are year round, using as minimal resources as possible.

So that business support program should be using that ideology where it's not just a seasonal agricultural program that has some social issues tied to it. But we also have to make sure that we have access in the decentralised manner and that's one of the tools that we have to kind of change both socially and food access at the same time. Does that answer your question?

DEBBIE FIELD: Mary Rita?

MARY RITA HOLLAND: I don't have anything specific either and certainly in the from the employer's perspective. But just a couple of things I would bring up would be we have in our platform a proposal for post-secondary internships for 20,000 new post secondly internships which is the local work force. And beyond that essentially when it comes to farm workers, the protections that we have fought for a long time for, as NDP and continuing with allowing for a liveable wage, would be I think one of the best way that I could respond to that but nothing on the program itself.

DEBBIE FIELD: I think it's given who we are and the purpose of this meeting, perhaps the - which is to actually begin to think about - there's some new issues on our panel here this afternoon. So maybe even for one minute, if you could, the last person who spoke, just for the audience not to necessarily get into a big fight about it but just even if you could explain what the issue is because I'm not sure that everybody in the room understands.

QUESTION: So when it comes to an election season, we think of the needs of those who are voting. So when we look at this work, this program, when we say we're buying local, we're not taking into consideration the labor of folks who are being systemically oppressed be I the system and who aren't being given - and who aren't considered because they're not voting. So if we're only going to look at the needs of those who are benefitting from one side of the system, in this program those who are giving their labor and who are sacrificing their lives for us to eat well needs to be considered not just because they are not citizens but because they are humans who are connected and who are sacrificing things that Ontario tit zence and -- citizens and Canadian citizen s are not but they're reaping the benefits from.

DEBBIE FIELD: Keith would like to say something.

KEITH CURRY: So I think you're confused about the seasonal ag worker program. This program is 60 years old, it's been a very successful program in Ontario. It's not like the temporary reform worker program. I's a season - the seasonal ag worker program is an agreement between countries like Jamaica, like some of the countries in the Barbados, Mexico, where their workers come here, it's an arranged - it's an arrangement that's made where all their expenses are paid, their housing is paid, their transportation system is paid a) as well as they get at least minimum wage while working here which now will be $14 an hour.

They actually live better than a lot of our farm families dond a it's so successful that we are now on third and fourth generations of people coming to this country under that program and a lot of them are becoming new Canadians because it's been so successful. My preference is government get out of the way and leave the program alone, it's working fantastic for us and the reason why it's successful is because we can't get locals to do the work. That's why we brought the program in. As a farmer who at one time employed 30 employees I vugled to get -- struggled to get local people to come to work for me. I could not get them to come or they would only work for a day. I would be happy to employ only local people. But the reality is people don't want to work the way they need to work for us to be sustainable on the farm. So what you're talking about I'm not sure you're understanding the seasonal ag worker program but it's very well rellated -- regulated and also very successful for everybody. Deb so just briefly you mentioned you were sixth or 8th generation farmer. So if question look at the dynamic of what it means for you to have the social location of being an 8th generation farmer, that lends - is a narrow lens that is not taking into consideration the needs of people along those generations.

When we think of what will come in the next eight generations, the models that have worked to give you the is it and the success is not going to be the same models that will give all people sustainability and success. So we have to recognize that, yes, it's been successful, if you want the government to step out of the way to maintain your social location that is not going to serve all the people.

DEBBIE FIELD: OK. We'll take another question if we have one. There's one over there.

SPEAKER: My name is Frank, I 50em a retired -- I'm a retired university professor and a volunteer for Toronto 350. I have a question to the proparties about global warming and climate change. It would seem to me, and I guess to many others, that a principle threat to food security worldwide but here in Ontario is the changing climate and what we are doing to it. My question is - what do the two parties represented here propose to do about global warming, in a serious way. This is not simply a big unmanageable issue. There must be practical things, new things, not the old. I'd like to hear, if you would, what your new ideas are, both of you, both parties, for combatting a global warming and climate change as threats to food security. Thank you.

DEBBIE FIELD: Anyone want to mix it up? Priyan do you want to go first or second? This is obviously your question. OK it's your question.

PRIYAN DE SILVA: So the way that our policies are made, we try to be using the lens of adapting and mitigating to climate change. We understand the crises. So our 9-point platform that we currently have is really looking at how we transform socially and economically in these times. Changing over to public transit is that environmentally sustainable, changing over from a fossil fuel-addicted management system, economic system, is something that we're looking at.

So there are things we're doing such as advocating for renewable energy, so moving away from nuclear and from fossil fuels, transitioning that through our Friends in Quebec, getting our micro hydro which is cheaper than what we're getting from hickering and understanding that is going to be better for our soil and our water, which will increase our agricultural production.

We're also looking at ways to continue to protect the green belt, to expand it, to be fair to farmers that are already on it by giving them the adequate feeds for capturing the carbon and to improve the waterways because a lot of the water that we drink comes from Lake Ontario and our streams are getting polluted and we have to make sure we protect that.

MARY RITA HOLLAND: Thanks. So somewhat similarly, we do plan to have quite significant investment in transit, LRT, essentially taking on 50% of the transit costs for municipalities whichsize a mun -- which as a municipal counselor it's huge. Municipals don't have the budge, they have it for capital but not for operating. And it co insides with the demand of the population we. Have fewer people who want to be driving and people who want to live in urban areas and along corridors that we can access through transit.

Also conservation and investment in renewables is a major part of the efforts that we have to combat climate change and we would like to expand natural gas so that all across the province, with 100 million dollar investment, to start to move away from the high impact carbon foot print, diesel-type energy.

DEBBIE FIELD: We have a question over here. Yourself, yes? Can we get the mic over here for a sec. And if you want to supplemental at all, there is space for that.

SPEAKER: Thank you all and thank you for the question about climate change, that is a good segue to what I wanted to ask. I work with the Food Systems Lab. What we work on is develop ing sustainable, just food system that addresses both food waste and food security. And what we - and food waste as a lot of you know I'm sure produces methane which is a major cause of climate change and much easier to address than a lot of our other ingrained systems.

So my question is - we currently have a plan towards a circular economy which gives us a system where we can work towards food justice, food security and addressing food waste in a really systemic way. And I'd like to hear your visions for how we can integrate issues like food waste and food security in a notoriously siloed system that we're getting into.

MARY RITA HOLLAND: Thanks a lot for the question. All of that has to do with preservation of the planet and the food system but also ensuring public health as well, which I know a lot of other people are quite interested in. And efficiencies which is something that governments are always interested in.

We have a few - I wick I could say we have an overall strategy to incorporate the ideas. We don't at this point. A number of measures, again, mentioning the investment in turning farm waste into biogas as one, to continually promote our renewable energy, improve it and promote renewable energy in the province.

The first approach, the first step in all of this is the - we are planning on developing a provincial food and water protection plan to promote health through access to local food, as what many of us here are talking about, but the prime focus in all this is ensuring access to clean drinking water as the number one priority.

So in terms of food systems, this means that we would have - we'd improve food safety rules an and address some of the large scale unique risks associated with development and with a lot of corporations and their activities, and we would also ensure that the regulations for smaller, less risky-type operations would be in place, but perhaps to a lesser extent essentially.

So beginning from the premise of protect ing and ensuring access, the hope is that working with partners we could continue to develop better ways to ensure the access to safe drinking water, ensuring prime farmland is protected and ongoing provision of clean and safe drinking water and food is a priority.

PRIYAN DE SILVA: So there isn't currently an overarching policy for food waste but there are talks in how we can use technology to advocate for limited food waste. We understand it's a large problem in our system. It creates a lot of methane as you said as it decomposing. There's a couple of different individuals and silos that we're talking about, getting rid of food waste but also having that social impact where applications that we now have in Toronto, especially where an individual who has more can share at a cost that would work for them but still get the foods to the people that need it.

And these are the types of things that the Green Party of Ontario are looking at to collaborate with people, new technologies, new innovations. Obviously food waste is something we want to get out of the system. A closed loop system is something be're looking at and how we can doing that in a better way, we're all ears for that. And you can see a lot of good examples in our community gardens in the Greater Toronto and the Golden Arch area and farmers are doing a good job of that right now and we want to promote that, especially local farms. Ultimately, the - there are many systemic issues that we will have to deal with, but we're always open to hear those comments and concerns so we can work on it.

DEBBIE FIELD: So the gentleman here? Mic over here and then I think two more of that.

SPEAKER: Thank you, I'm a gardener. So I would like to ask the provincial candidates about gardening. I think one candidate already mentioned about community garden. Because the Ontario or the Toronto there's lots of unused land and a lot of empty land that are not being used in the park area or outside parkside. So if your party do you have any planning to use those unused areas for cultivation, gardening, farming or like this to grow more food because you I think from Scarborough you know about the area, there is lots of (inaudible) people, they're from Bangladesh, India, and they like gardening and they like to grow food. So if you have any planning to grow more food in that city area, thanks.

PRIYAN DE SILVA: I'm guessing that was specifically for the Green Party. Right now in Scarborough there's a lot of different things happening in terms of utilising hydro fields in terms of utilising not just in Scarborough, the Downsview area to grow food, the Black Creek community so there are places that we can collaborate with farmers outside the GTHA and I think the Green Party really understands that. We do look at all the green spaces available and we want to ensure the people that own that get compensated for that as well.

So there are food advocacy policies that are in our vision, that aren't in our 9-policy statements right now. And those are things that we have long-term goals for in terms of putting in food veins which are being high density city, people have access to the food, particularly in Scarborough, we do have some space and we working on that to model it out.

MARY RITA HOLLAND: I will just add from the perspective of sort of a local municipality, we - the in Kingston, for example, we have a lot of correctional facilities and there's a fight over a number of years to preserve an area of land there, that's right in the urban core, prime agricultural land which was currently operated as a prison farm. Because of the work of a lot of local activities activists who have brought these issues, finally that land has been turned back over for use. So community gardens and ensuring the land that we do have in the urban core that we are getting the highest use of it in agricultural terms is a really important initiative.

DEBBIE FIELD: We have two more. One up there.

SPEAKER: Hi, I'm Vanessa and my question does not relate to catering. And I appreciate that you are work on all five of the questions and that you also admitted to not having concrete and final steps and policies and plans yets because I think if you had the final answer then we should just do it. Having said that, I would like to hear from both of you some concrete steps towards accountability, transparency and also enforcement because, I mean, many of us here appreciate food policy and I will have to admit that sometimes I'm a big supporter of policy but it takes so long to get it done and then nobody is enforcing it.

So I'd like to hear some concrete steps about accountability, transparency, inclusion and enforcement, as related to equity.

MARY RITA HOLLAND: You know what, I just saw that some --

DEBBIE FIELD: I just saw some in our front row have some answers and maybe we could do some questions - ask them to come up, maybe Paul and you guys can respond. OK. Leticia first.

LETICIA DEAWUO: I just wanted to really bring it back to the season of agriculture program because I think you didn't get the opportunity to really respond and I think it's really important for us to hear what your stance is on that topic and the seasonal agricultural group pranl which is also known as the migrant worker program is not working well. When workers are injured, you send back to their countries. They're not able to access the benefits that we get as tax taxpayer taxpayers. Even if they're not able to vote, it's important that we touch on that particular issue. So I wanted to hear what the NDP stands on that program and I also wanted to hear what your stance is on that program because it's not working and justice for migrant workers would give you a whole list of atrocities that is happening right here in Ontario.

[APPLAUSE]

MARY RITA HOLLAND: I am going to jump in now. OK. I just think - they're going to be back in this thing of one and one . So I will add.

SPEAKER: I will deviate a little away from food. But, you know, I was eating dinner last night as I watched the debate so it's kind of related to food. And I looked up and I recognized, much like I have - very good to see you here - much like I have in the past, that I saw three white folks represent ing the three political parties that are in contention. I will just leave it there. I'm sure - I think next year will be the first time that I will see a Federal leader that looks a little bit like me in one of those debates. So I'm really curious to see what your parties are committed to doing to ensure that people of color, racialized folks are accessing leadership, not just getting elected but also accessing leadership within the party.

SPEAKER: Maybe that's - that will kind of do it. So final summaries from our - one last sir? OK. Do you want to take one last one?

SPEAKER: I also want to echo what Leticia was saying in the first question. I think it is important for us to note that within the food industry more generally it is the workers that are produce ing the food, the workers that are serving us the food in the restaurants and packing up our food and in the grocery stores and stacking up the food. So the workers have to be considered from farm all the way to the table. And workers aren't - their interests are not the same as the interests of the big farmers and of the big conglomerates and we know this over and over again. There was a very recent price fixing scandal. That was not the workers that did it but the companies. When the minimum wage policy came down, the most prominent viations were from Tim Hortons. So the we've seen the government take the side of business more than workers and if you talk about the agricultural industry, there's been actually laws that prevent workers from organizing into unions and actually whenever there's been attempts to do so it's been struck down. So something as simple as that, would the two of you support uniization of food workers all through the industry from farmers all the way to restaurant workers? And would you support the regularization of the migrant farm workers because without regularlization, with their precarious status, they can be treated as quasi indentured labor and in this day and age in Canada that is unacceptable. So regularization and unionization, would you guys agree?

DEBBIE FIELD: So we will get our final summaries.

MARY RITA HOLLAND: OK. So I'm going to start - I will start with the accountability, transparency. It relates to equity but also to some of the other issues having to do with social justice and support for racialized communities in particular. In our party, which I can speak for as the President in terms of the organization of the party, it is fundamental to who we are that we are inclusive, that social justice and equithe are the prime focus of our policies and I can tell you when we get together as a group that's what people talk about.

We have been trying - and I would say we've done a lot, I don't know what other parties have done, but a significant amount of work in the last while to introduce anti-racism and anti-oppression training into our organization. When it comes to encouraging people to take on leadership roles in the party, the recruitment of our candidates, was a long process that involved digging deep into every community to find racialized individuals who would be interested in running and supporting them in their pursuits if they were interested: We do have - I am going to say the largest but I think it's quite large percentage of racialized candidates in this election campaign, the highest we've ever had which I think is a testament to that hard work. It is rs work, it's work in terms of making ourselves known at a community level.

So that will continue for sure while I'm President of this party, and I know that our leader has been promoting equity inclusion, anti-racism. We have been talking a lot in this campaign about some of the initiatives having to do with ending carding that our party has been supportive of. We have an anti-racism fund which is just an initiative that we're bringing forward to find ways to invest because a lot of this work, this actual change requires a budget line.

So the - in terms of how - the social justice equity inclusion aspect, again, we - the members of this party hold us to account when it comes to anti-poverty initiatives. That is why many people are New Democrats, why they have identified with this party. It is a core value.

Our farmer care and dental care programs I think are a testament to that in that we believe in universal access to health. We believe that the health care system is - has moved beyond the walls of hospitals and if we're going to say we have a public health care system we need to start funding dental and farmer care.

Our support for workers, we are - we - we are going to make it easier for all workers to unionize. We also have introduced in our platform access to three weeks of paid holiday, up from two weeks, so every worker in the province of Ontario would benefit from that. The minimum wage of course, indetermining it din - indexing it to inflation and this benefits package program for all the workers handling our food throughout the process, whether it's the grocery stores, those individuals would benefit from, if they're employer does haven't a program in place, there would be a program in place to ensure all of the basic dental and farmer care needs of our workers are met.

Of course, this does not address migrant farmers

>> I acknowledge that. I would like to speak to the regularization. I can't because I don't have the specifics in front of me and I do not want to go out on a limb, but I hope that you can take from what I've said that we care deeply for the well-being of every single individual in this province and certainly see the need to improve the standard of living for those who are most vulnerable.

PRIYAN DE SILVA: So I think you guys had some really interesting questions about the regulation and uniization of temporary workers. So this is something that I will have to bring back to the table to and unbox that and work out how it will work with the Green Party. We are not just about climate change, we are about people as well. I think that's a conversation we're going to have to have in the 21st century economy as more automation occurs, as our food systems change to a more decentralised manner within high density systems.

Accessing leadership - I think that's a big part of addressing issues like this. In the Green Party we went out looking for a 50% people who identified themselves female gendered to ensure that we have those other tough conversations. We tried to get as many different people from different spectrums as possible because the more that we can communicate with one another under those terms the more we understand one another.

And ultimately I think there was an issue about inclusion in the back. So these are the things that I will be bringing back to our party to make these decisions on and really look at how regularation and uni unionization works for temporary foreign workers and their health care. If you are feeding people in Ontario and you are part of a system that doesn't give back, I think, again, I have to look at the work behind that but there's a lot of people that are asking these questions and I think those are questions that we need to answer.

The Green Party also was a leader in ensuring that we take money out of politics. That that was one of the big issues and one of the root causes while the democracy wasn't working for the people. Even without anybody in the - as an MPP to lower donations, to not get union donations from unions or corporation and have a democracy that works so we can have these conversations. We are who we are and really tin flution is the -- inclusion is the key to get over these issues. We will have other barriers that we're willing to discuss. So please I will bring this up at plenary and hopefully the individuals who asked these questions, I want to get back to you so please make sure you see me.

DEBBIE FIELD: I will welcome back Rachel Gray from the Toronto Food Policy Council.

RACHEL GRAY: I want to thank you you for taking the time out of canvassing to be here. And thank you to all of the sponsors who have made this happen. And to Ryerson for hosting us, Fiona, is somewhere. Aand I would like to call out Debbie Field's particular approach to retirement. IE, leave the city, travel the world, start working at Ryerson and come back and organize an event that we should all be quite so energetic. It's too bad there were only two parties here today because we know that food is a way to conversations about the environment, it's a way into conversations about the health and the economy, about land sovereignty and about equity.

So we will keep having these conversations. We are delighted that so many of you are here today join us in that and we will make sure, if we can, to share that with the other parties who are too busy to be here today. Thank you for being here and, if I could, if you haven't voted yet, advanced poles are open -- polls are open to the 30th and you can vote over there. Thanks very much.

SPEAKER: I want to end by telling a story about something that happened to us at Ryerson 11 years ago when we first tried to form Food Secure Canada. (Unknown term) and I had a group of people, not in this beautiful building but over there in one of the old spaces, and we had people from across the country, Mustafa had gotten a grant that brought people to Toronto and we saw look people are coming from the territory and there will be everybody coming together and on the morning of the plenary, things broke into a really ugly fight between farmers and low income people. Some farmers stood up at the mic and said, "In our constitution of this new organization," And we had not come to the democracy - and the farmers said you have no idea how hard I work and unless we embed what it means to be a farmer and put it into the constitution we're walking.

And then Sue Cox, bless her heart, who was then the executive director of Daily Bread said I haven't tried a boomerang or anything butteer not talking about low income people or about equity, you're not talking about poverty in the way I'm prepared and it blew up and it took a while to knit it back together. As you have seen, our issues are complicated - how to make it right for all parts of the food system. So that Keith can grow his food, so a farm worker who comes from Jamaica is not expelled. Each of us see these different realities and are trying to figure it out. To thanks to the six of you for standing in place for a quite complicated movement. Thanks for a great conversation and thanks again to our two candidates for coming.

[APPLAUSE]

SPEAKER: Just one last thing - make sure you vote. And thank you to Amanda, Mollie and Nicole who did all the heavy lifting.

And to this great building and the Ryerson student center for hosting, give us all this free and wonderful support.

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