

10/9/2018

Dear Members of the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation,

Thank you for writing, for providing us with the opportunity to speak to rural issues and share the Green Party of Canada's platform, and for your advocacy. Please find our response below.

Best regards,

Steve Parkinson
Director of Policy and Correspondence
Green Party of Canada

The Green Party of Canada agrees with the members of the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation that rural communities deserve a larger role in developing the policy solutions required to address the challenges faced by Canadians during this time of rapid change.

Canada's constitutional division of powers between federal and provincial levels of government, together with the constitutional protection of Indigenous treaty rights and our adoption of the provisions of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, both enable and constrain the federal government in setting national priorities. We need a mechanism that convenes all governments to discuss and decide upon issues of national importance.

Successive governments have skirted the issue of ensuring municipalities are properly consulted and funded to fulfill their responsibilities. No one wants to reopen the Constitution. But, it is time to give the municipal order of government the tools and support required to provide the fundamental services relied on by the vast majority of Canadians who live within urban boundaries or in smaller and rural townships. With only 10 cents out of every tax dollar flowing to the municipal order of government, vast inequities in our governance structures and financial stability have been created. If responsibilities are downloaded to municipalities then revenue sharing agreements need to be reviewed to ensure that they have the funds to successfully fulfill those responsibilities. A Green government will institutionalize federal transfers to municipalities through the creation of a Municipal Fund, renaming the Gas Tax funds, which were delinked from gas tax revenue years ago. Ensure a doubling of current funding to ensure predictable and reliable funding to municipalities.

A Green government will support the model of collaborative federalism, working with and ensuring fair treatment for provinces, territories, municipalities and First Nations. We will establish a Council of Canadian Governments to set higher order policy priorities, with the goal of policy coherence to optimize public spending. It would include the federal government, provincial/territorial governments, representatives of the local order of

government with large city mayors and smaller and rural municipalities, and Indigenous (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) governments. This is similar to one in place in Australia and will give local governments a seat at the policy-making table through a Council of Canadian Governments.

Other examples of Green commitments that may be of interest to rural communities include:

- A new national transportation strategy that includes service to rural and remote communities, since everyone in Canada must have access to reliable transportation options at affordable rates.
- A new vision of Canada Post, including return of home postal delivery and implementation of postal banking and public high-speed internet access at Canada Post facilities.
- Expansion of programs to ensure that communities across the country have access to reliable, affordable, high-speed internet, recognizing that there is currently a digital divide separating those with such access and those without.
- A restoration of the federal/provincial Health Accord, basing health transfers on demographics and real health care needs in each province, replacing the current formula based on GDP growth introduced by the Harper government and retained by the Liberals.
- A universal Guaranteed Livable Income (GLI) program to replace the current array of income supports, such as disability payments, social assistance and income supplements for seniors. Payment would be set at a “livable” level for different regions of the country. The negotiation to implement a livable income across the country would take place through the Council of Canadian Governments. Unlike existing income support programs, additional income would not be clawed back. Those earning above a certain total income would pay the GLI back in taxes.

We hope that you will look forward to further details of these and other initiatives in our soon to be released 2019 electoral platform, and look forward to working with you on their development in the near future.

