

New

Federal election: what the party platforms say about northern Ontario

Liberal and Green platforms only ones to not mention northern Ontario

By Erik White, [CBC News](#) Posted: Oct 15, 2015 8:31 AM ET Last Updated: Oct 15, 2015 8:31 AM ET

While the election campaign has been rolling on for 73 days now, only recently have the parties publicly released their platforms — and there is a big range in what they say about northern Ontario.

New Democrats in the North are quick to rally around their Northern Ontario platform released last month.

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At a debate last week, Sudbury NDP candidate Paul Loewenberg claimed the New Democrats "are the only party to have a platform dedicated to northern Ontario. The Liberal platform didn't mention northern Ontario once."

In the main NDP platform, northern Ontario is only mentioned once, in relation to the Ring of Fire.

The party does have a 16 page northern Ontario platform, but a lot of those pages are dedicated to national issues — and are similar to the NDP's platforms for Toronto and Atlantic Canada.

The Liberal platform does not contain the words "northern Ontario," neither does the Green Party's platform.

The Conservative platform also commits to developing the Ring of Fire, mentioning Northern Ontario in the process, but it also devotes several planks devoted to helping the mining and forest industries.

Nipissing University political scientist David Tabachnick doesn't see much value in a specific platform for just for the nine ridings in this region.

"It's a matter of rhetoric or presentation, rather than substance," he said.

Tabachnick says he suspects most northern Ontario voters will make their decision based on issues affecting all Canadians, rather than local concerns.

Mike Commito, a policy analyst at the Northern Policy Institute in Sudbury, said he's pleased to see local issues like the Ring of Fire being addressed and hopes northern voters consider that.

But he was hoping for more specifics on things like infrastructure renewal and aboriginal education, rather than just the amount of money being promised.

"How a lot of these platforms and promises go is they're very vague and open ended and they're not very specific," he said.

What the party platforms say about northern Ontario

New Democrats

- Make FedNor a standalone agency and boost up annual budget by \$12.6 million
- Make mineral exploration tax credit permanent, committing \$45 million in first year of mandate and \$35 million in three following years
- Promise to spend \$1 billion on infrastructure to develop Ring of Fire mining region
- Develop national forestry strategy, including \$105 million over three year for wood industry innovation
- Spend \$820 million on infrastructure in northern Ontario over the next 20 years

Conservatives

- Platform mentions Ring of Fire as an important mining project in need of development
- Promises to make mining exploration tax credit the Conservatives introduced permanent, spending \$45 million annually on this program for the next four years.
- Commits \$3 million annually over next four years on promotion of the forest industry, including a fund that will match private sector spending on "fighting back" misinformation about the wood business.
- Pledge to expand broadband Internet into more rural communities and first nations across the country.

Liberal

- No specific mention of "northern Ontario"
- Only mentions of mining and forestry come in promise to spend \$200 million more each year on helping traditional resource industries innovate and find new products

Green

- No specific mention of "northern Ontario" or mining
- Forestry and specifically "value-added forest products" mentioned as a growth industry the party would like to encourage.

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