



## **Labour, Victims Shut out of Work Safety Panel**

On May 5<sup>th</sup>, NDP Labour Critic Peter Kormos joined the OFL in demanding an effective voice for workers like Bud Simpson, a victim of occupational diseases in Sarnia's chemical valley.

Kormos demanded in the house that the Liberal Government include representatives of labour and injured workers in consultations on compensation and prevention of occupational diseases.

"The 6,000 workers who die every year from job-related diseases deserve to be heard on this issue," Kormos told the legislature. "But the Labour Ministry and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board has shut them out of the occupational disease consultation panel."

The panel was part of a WSIB strategy on occupational diseases created after years of pressure by the Ontario Federation of Labour. But after two years of working with employer representatives on the panel, labour and injured workers' representatives have been reduced to observer status only.

"The Liberals are shutting out Bud Simpson and his family and all the other workers who suffer from occupational diseases," Kormos said.

## **NDP Acts to Enhance Pensions**

NDP Labour Critic, Peter Kormos, introduced legislation in May that would protect and enhance pensions in Ontario.

"People work hard for their pensions and deserve to retire without having to worry about their benefits," Kormos said. "I call on the Liberals and Conservatives to support this bill and pass it quickly."

Kormos' bill would raise the monthly benefits provided by the Pension Benefit Guarantee Fund to \$2,500 from the current \$1,000. The fund makes up for pension shortfalls when companies are unable to fulfill their obligations. It would protect workers such as those at Stelco in Hamilton or Atlas Specialty Steels in Welland.

"It's time to bring pension rules into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. It's time to give retirees the peace of mind that comes with knowing they'll be able to pay the rent and put food on the table," Kormos said.

## **NDP Trounces Liberals in Hamilton East!**

On May 13<sup>th</sup> NDP candidate Andrea Horwath trounced Liberal appointee Ralph Agostino in a by-election that served as a referendum on the Liberal record at Queen's Park since they formed the government last September.

Horwath, a three-time city councillor, defeated Agostino, brother of former Liberal backbencher Dominic Agostino, by more than 8,800 votes.

"This is more than a win, this is a shellacking," declared NDP leader Howard Hampton. The unofficial count was 15,185 votes for Horwath to 6,362 votes for Agostino.

"Hamilton East voters have spoken loud and clear – they delivered a vote of non-confidence to an arrogant Liberal Government," said Horwath in her victory speech. "And they've given an official vote of confidence in the NDP."

The victory gives the NDP the eighth seat needed to regain official party status in the legislature, and with it almost \$2 million in annual caucus funding.

## **McGuinty Budget Plunders Working Families' Pockets**

On May 18<sup>th</sup> the McGuinty Liberals released their first provincial budget. The budget included the re-introduction of OHIP premiums for anyone earning over \$20,000 a year.

The premium – in actual fact a hidden regressive tax – will be deducted from employees' paycheques as provincial tax, and will hit middle-income earners the hardest. The tax will not be earmarked for a special fund for health care, but will go into the general consolidated revenue fund that pays for all government services.

"The Liberal Budget is one of the most regressive revenue grabs in Ontario's history with the return of OHIP premiums," said NDP Leader Howard Hampton.

"Moderate and low income Ontarians are going to be digging even deeper to pay for health care," Hampton said. "Dalton McGuinty has crept into their homes like a thief in the night and robbed them blind. They were

already paying more for hydro, auto insurance and other fees.”

Meanwhile, wealthy Ontarians continue to enjoy a 35 percent tax cut and corporations a \$700 million Employer Health Tax loophole.



On top of the premiums, Ontarians will be forced to pay \$157 million for newly de-listed healthcare services like physiotherapy, chiropractic and optometry services. And the Liberals are raising fees, including those for drivers' licences, fishing and hunting licences and small claims court.

Hydro bills will rise once again by an average of \$300 million a year as McGuinty implements a \$3.9 billion hydro debt paper shuffle. Without this paper shuffle, the deficit this year would be \$6 billion.

While fees and premiums are piled up on Ontarians, provincial services are likely to decline over the next four years. Budgets have been frozen or cut in 15 ministries, including Natural Resources, Northern Affairs, Tourism and Recreation and Culture until 2008.

“My message to middle and low-income Ontarians is hide your wallet – Dalton McGuinty is coming,” Hampton said.

### McGuinty Liberals Keep Tory Tax Cuts

The Liberal's Budget left in place the \$10.5 billion in personal income tax cuts delivered by the Harris/Eves Government. The Liberals also chose to retain the \$3 billion in corporate tax cuts delivered by the Tories in their second term in office. They endorsed the Eves Government's elimination of the corporate capital tax – the major

beneficiaries of which are the major banks.

The Liberals also left in place a huge loophole in the Employer Health Tax – the \$1.1 billion exemption for the first \$400,000 in payroll.

### Budget Falls Short on Social Spending

The Liberal's Budget contained very little for the most vulnerable in our society. For a family with two children the reduction in the child benefit clawback is worth only \$89. Completely eliminating the clawback would have benefitted that same family by \$2,800.

There is no new provincial money for child care spaces despite a promise of \$300 million by the Liberals in the last election campaign.

The government is also renegeing on its commitment to match federal housing funds. Federal housing funds will be \$67 million while new provincial funding is only \$18 million.

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### KORMOS' KORNER



NDP Labour Critic  
Peter Kormos

“On May 10<sup>th</sup> the negotiating team of CEP Local 87-M, media workers at the Toronto Sun, wrapped up some around-the-clock bargaining, striking a deal, hard and tough won, at the bargaining table.

New Democrats here at Queen's Park want to congratulate those workers. It's been a tough, hard struggle, with a tough boss, but at the end of the day, the workers and their union will have won. That's how it's done.

The members of CEP Local 87-M at the Toronto Sun, are setting a standard and demonstrating to other media workers across Ontario – low-paid, understaffed and certainly underappreciated in any number of newspaper chains – that you can fight back and win. You fight back with the union. You fight back with union solidarity. You fight back by standing shoulder-to-shoulder, arm-in-arm with your sisters and brothers in your local and across the labour movement.

That's how you win these struggles for fairness in the workplace, for justice in the workplace, for better wages, better salaries, better pensions and more job security. It's never wrong to fight for any of those things. It's a fight not only for these workers, but by them for their children as well.”

- Peter Kormos

