



New Human Rights Bill Hurts Those Who Need It Most

On April 26, the McGuinty Liberals introduced Bill 107, An Act to Amend the Human Rights Code. Unions, community groups and the NDP all condemned the Bill as a disaster for Human Rights in Ontario, and called on the government to hold public hearings to give a say to those who will be affected.

OFL Executive Vice-President Terry Downey said the legislation “will only make matters worse for the very people the Commission was set up to help. Under the guise of ‘direct access’ to a Human Rights Tribunal this legislation only allows access to a court – not justice,” said Downey. “It’s privatization of a publicly-funded human rights system. The amendments serve to Americanize the system.”

OPSEU President Leah Casselman said the Bill “guts the Ontario Human Rights Commission, and will hurt those who need protection the most. It does nothing to improve the system, but takes away guaranteed rights to investigation and legal support and allows the Tribunal to charge user fees.”

NDP MPP Peter Kormos said “New Democrats are concerned that the government is following the same path as British Columbia, which introduced similar legislative reforms three years ago, and is now suffering under a gigantic, even bigger backlog. We’re concerned about giving powers of investigation to the same tribunal that will decide whether those claims have merit. We are concerned about the lack of firm legislative timelines that guarantee that complaints are heard and remedied in a reasonable time.”

“The Human Rights Commission resolves 48% of all complaints through mediation alone. That’s incredibly low-cost, efficient and effective. That’s the very same commission that the McGuinty Liberals are shutting down. They’re forcing people into what they call direct access. I have no doubt that their private lawyer friends think this is a good plan, but people affected by discrimination, whose lives are impacted by discrimination on a daily basis, know that it’s wrong-headed and ineffective. Quite frankly, it’s a process that’s going to deny them access to a tribunal and access to any justice or fairness,” said Kormos.

Cut-throat / Competitive Bidding in Home Care

The Ontario Health Coalition estimates that \$66 million is spent annually on the competitive bidding process in Home Care – money that doesn’t provide a single nurse, personal support worker, therapist, or social worker to frail and elderly Ontarians who need support in their homes. Despite this high cost, there has never been a clearly demonstrated benefit or business case to holding these competitions.

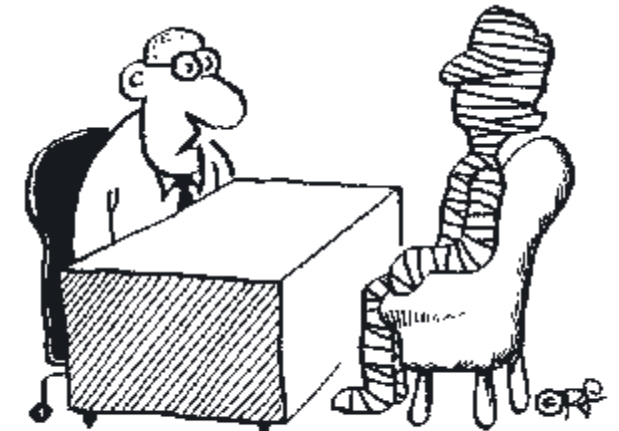
NDP Health and Long-Term Care Critic Shelley Martel criticized the McGuinty Liberal government for continuing the destructive cut-throat / competitive bidding process in Ontario’s home care sector that was implemented by the previous Conservative government.

“Cut-throat bidding has decimated the not-for-profit provider agencies in this sector and has seriously undervalued and under-compensated those dedicated to providing care to seniors and the disabled in their own homes,” said Martel. “New Democrats will continue to urge the McGuinty Liberal government to end cut-throat bidding in home care and to guarantee that this destructive practice will not become the model used by the Local Health Integrated Networks (LHINs) to purchase services in their respective health care sectors.”

Day of Mourning

NDP Leader Howard Hampton issued the following statement on the National Day of Mourning:

“On this National Day of Mourning, we honour the memory of working women and men killed on the job. Ninety-two years ago, workers fought governments and employers so that employees would not have to die to feed their children. Ninety-two years later, their children and grandchildren are still fighting.



“We’ll wait until someone else gets hurt, then we’ll fix the machine.”

Last year, pallbearers carried 322 Ontario workers to their graves as a direct result of workplace conditions. Another 357,555 workers had to claim compensation for work-related diseases. Missing from the official record were an estimated 6,000 workers killed by cancer, lung disease and other ailments, all attributed to toxic substance exposure in their workplaces.

But it's too easy to get lost in the numbers. It is vital that we remember that each of these deaths, each of these injuries happened to real people: workers – women and men with families and friends

As we join together to honour the memory and mourn the passing of workers killed on the job, we share a commitment to fight for change and fight for a day when we won't need a day of mourning because working people won't be killed on the job.

To do that, working people need to organize and governments need to legislate. We need legislation that will ensure that workers have the right to refuse to work in potentially dangerous situations.

New Democrats stand with workers today to mourn for the dead and in the days to come to fight for the living.”

KORMOS' KORNER

“Dalton McGuinty’s decision to appoint Liberal Steve Mahoney to Chair the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) is a slap in the face to working people in Ontario.

The Workplace Safety and Insurance Board is supposed to be there for injured workers not unemployed Liberal Party hacks. Mahoney is not only blatantly partisan, his past statements make it clear that he’s more concerned with helping big business than meeting the needs of injured workers.

Mahoney was a Liberal MPP from 1987 to 1995 and a Liberal MP from 1997 until 2004. During that time he served as Labour Critic for the Liberal Caucus and published a report calling for rate cuts for bosses, opposing extension of coverage for workers and rejecting compensation for stress.

Injured workers in Ontario need someone to stick up for them. Instead Dalton McGuinty chose to stick up for his friends.”



NDP Labour Critic
Peter Kormos

- Peter Kormos



Environics Poll

An Environics Poll released in mid-April found the Liberal Government of Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty has lost the lead in voter preference it had enjoyed since the summer.

Support for the Liberals dropped to one third of decided voters, down eight points from their level of support in both October and December 2005, and down 12 points from the 2003 election.

The Ontario Conservatives moved into first place, with support from 39 percent of decided voters, up three percent from December 2005, and up five points from the 2003 election.

Support for the Ontario NDP increased substantially to 24 percent, up five points from December 2005, and up nine points from the 2003 election.

Three percent of decided voters opted for minor parties and eight percent of eligible voters expressed no party preference.

Liberal support was almost equal among men and women (33% and 36%). The PCs are significantly more popular among men than among women (46% vs. 33%), and conversely the NDP gets far more support from women than from men (29%

vs. 19%). The PCs do better among older voters and the NDP among younger ones, while the Liberal support is consistent across all age groups.

Analysis of the findings suggests that support for the provincial PCs is buoyed somewhat by the current “honeymoon” enjoyed by the new federal Conservative government, while the Liberal brand in Ontario may have been damaged by the defeat of their federal cousins and the current leadership vacuum in the federal Liberal Party. Increased support for the NDP in Ontario may be helped by the aftermath of a strong federal NDP campaign.

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