



FOCUS ON QUEEN'S PARK



Liberal Throne Speech Panned

On October 12 the McGuinty Liberals delivered a Speech from the Throne to open the 2nd Session of the 38th Parliament. Labour and the opposition parties called the Throne Speech inadequate.

OFL President Wayne Samuelson said the Liberals “are suffering from long-term memory loss and short-term political fixes. It’s about time someone reminded this government that abandoning critical promises to the people of this province is not good government,” said Samuelson.

NDP Leader Howard Hampton called the speech hollow and empty. “Positive change and results for people are things that people expected to be front and centre in the McGuinty government’s Throne Speech,” said Hampton. “Instead, the people of Ontario got what I could only describe as a hollow, empty Throne Speech, with no vision, no ideas and certainly no plan.”

“Instead of a plan for positive results for people, ordinary families are told to settle for rehashed promises that the McGuinty government has spent the last two years breaking – broken promises on everything from health care to education to energy to the environment to help for Ontario’s most vulnerable citizens,” said Hampton.

No Action on P3’s

The Throne Speech was also panned for its lack of action on stopping P3 hospitals. OFL President Wayne Samuelson says McGuinty promised before the election to end the ‘failed policies of creeping privatization’. “The 23 hospitals under threat of privatization in 2005 would like to remind the Premier of that promise,” said Samuelson.

ONDP Leader Howard Hampton also says that ‘No P3’s’ is one of Mr. McGuinty’s broken promises. “McGuinty promised he would ensure that publicly owned hospitals in Brampton and Ottawa are not privately owned. But the new contracts in Brampton and Ottawa are essentially the same as the old contracts signed under the Conservatives,” said Hampton.

“Services vital to patient care will be privatized for at least 25 years, and the private consortia stand to make a fortune from the private financing of those hospitals. Money should not be taken from patient care in order to fatten the wallets of Bay Street financiers who happen from time to time to be friends of the McGuinty government,” said Hampton.

What About the Health Tax?

NDP Leader Howard Hampton wants to know who will be on the hook for the McGuinty Liberals’ new health tax. “At the urging of the United Food and Commercial Workers, the Divisional Court has just ruled that under a collective agreement at a Guelph nursing home, the employer, not the employees, must bear the cost of the Liberals despised health tax,” says Hampton. “Thousands of Ontario employees have similar wording in their collective agreements and deserve equal treatment.”



“The reality is that there are a number of public service collective agreements – power worker collective agreements, hospital collective agreements, education worker

collective agreements and municipal worker collective agreements – that are very similar to the UFCW collective agreement that was considered in this case,” says Hampton.

“This means that there are literally tens of thousands of hard-working dedicated public servants who have made a reasonable argument based upon their collective agreement, that their employer, the government, is responsible for paying the Liberal health premium.”

Bills Before The House

One Government Bill was introduced at First Reading since the session began:

Bill 11, *Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act*, would repeal the current *Act* and make other amendments.

Nine Private Members’ Bills were introduced at First Reading:

Bill 2, *The Home Fire Sprinkler Act*, (Lib) would ensure that all new residential properties be built to include fire sprinklers.

Bill 3, *Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Amendment Act*, (PC) would provide tax rebates to

municipalities to invest in public transit or highways.

Bill 4, *Health Insurance Amendment Act*, (Lib) would have OHIP cover PSA tests for prostate cancer.

Bill 5, *Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act*, (Lib) would rename a portion of two highways.

Bill 6, *Fred Gloger Tenant Protection Amendment Act*, (NDP) would ensure that tenants whose utilities are included in their rent won't have their services disconnected if the landlord fails to pay the bills.

Bill 8, *Children's Law Reform Amendment Act*, (Lib) would ensure the rights of grandparents with respect to their relationships with their grandchildren.

Bill 9, *Gender-Based Price Discrimination Prohibition Act*, (Lib) would prohibit gender-based differences in pricing.

Bill 10, *Gas Price Watchdog Act*, (Lib) would ensure that gas companies have to justify their prices.

Bill 12, *No Tuition Hikes Act*, (NDP) would freeze tuition fees for another two years.

KORMOS' KORNER

"Doesn't it just rot your socks when you hear the government talking about ending so-called mandatory retirement? We know there are thousands of people over 65 working all over Ontario because they have to, they don't have any choice.

They're Wal-Mart greeters; they're working in fast food joints; they're working in minimum wage retail operations.

The government says this is about choice. New Democrats say it's about values. The government says it's going to change the culture. We agree. It's going to change the culture in a most regrettable way.

I'm a child of immigrant parents who worked incredibly hard, and struggled and fought as trade unionists, among other things, so that their grandchildren wouldn't have to work until they dropped dead in the workplace, but rather could enjoy things like pensions and a retirement at a reasonable enough age so that you can spend those senior years doing the things you didn't have the time to do while you were working.

You've got a government here that is trying to create a culture where people work until they drop. That's not moving forward. That's not the kind of world your parents worked hard to build."

Peter Kormos



NDP Labour Critic
Peter Kormos



More Forestry Lay-offs

OFL President Wayne Samuelson says the McGuinty Liberals have broken their promise to protect jobs in the North. "The reality is forestry and industry in the North are in crisis and are shedding jobs monthly," said Samuelson.

NDP Leader Howard Hampton raised the issue of lay-offs at Abitibi Consolidated in Kenora during Question Period. He grilled Minister of Natural Resources David Ramsey about the government's lack of action on the forestry industry.

Hampton says the McGuinty Liberals have abandoned northern forestry workers. "The Premier has been announcing and re-announcing with much fanfare that he has a \$680 million strategy to help the forest sector in the province of Ontario," said Hampton. "He has been re-announcing it since the spring. Yet now in the city of Kenora, Abitibi Consolidated is going to shut down their paper mill and lay off 360 people, which will be devastating to the community."

The Minister responded that the government had worked out a deal with Abitibi to keep one machine operating, but the workers would have to "contribute to the future of keeping number 10 machine going."

"I met with the union yesterday," said Ramsay. "Basically, their attitude is that Kenora is going to be their beachhead."

Hampton accused the Minister of blaming the workers, instead of addressing the real issues. "Here is the reality for the Kenora mill. They've got a very good market. There are newspapers in the United States, in the Midwest, that want to buy their paper. They've got a very experienced workforce. They've got a wood fibre basket that other paper mills in North America would give their right arm for. What they don't have is a reasonably priced hydro-electricity source," said Hampton.

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Publication of
The Political and Legislative Department
Ontario Federation of Labour
(416) 441-2731
www.ofl.ca

cope343