



FOCUS ON QUEEN'S PARK



Liberals Shout Down DiNovo on Person's Day

NDP MPP Cheri DiNovo was shouted down by MPPs from the Liberal Caucus during her speech in the Legislature celebrating Person's Day on October 18. The day commemorates the ruling by the British Privy Council in 1929 that women are persons under Canadian law.

DiNovo began her remarks by acknowledging women such as Rosemary Brown, the first woman of colour ever elected in Canada in BC in 1972; Zanana Akande, the first woman of colour ever made cabinet minister in Ontario, in 1990; Jenny Kwan, in 1996 in BC, one of the first two women of Asian heritage ever elected to a Canadian Legislature; Joan Beatty, in 2003, the first aboriginal cabinet minister ever elected; and Agnes Macphail, the first woman ever to be elected to the House of Commons in 1921, the first year women could vote legally. All of these women were elected for the NDP, except Agnes Macphail, who represented the Progressive Party and later the CCF.

On five occasions the Speaker had to call the MPPs to order to enable DiNovo to continue. On two occasions it was the Minister of Finance Greg Sorbara who had to be called to order.

"Again, to continue over the shouts of some of the men in the House, I'd like to say that the true tribute to women is what we do right now," said DiNovo. "Right here, in the province of Ontario, two thirds of the women who work and live on minimum wage, who can't pay the rent and feed their children, need a raise in the minimum wage to \$10 an hour. Women need child care right now. They need that \$300 million. Nine out of 10 of our children go without a child care space. So if we want to really pay a tribute to women, let's do that by acting now."

No Minimum Standards for Seniors

SEIU, which represents 12,000 nursing home workers, says the McGuinty Liberals have broken their promise to improve care for seniors in long-term care facilities.

"Despite increased government funding, we have not seen any significant improvements to the quality of care that Ontario nursing home residents receive," says Cathy Carroll, Secretary-Treasurer of SEIU Local 1.on. The union surveyed members at 140 long-term care facilities they represent across Ontario and found that resident care continues to suffer.

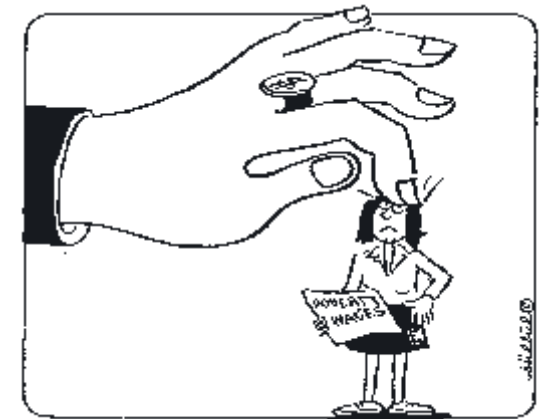
New legislation now before the House is also being criticized by NDP Health Critic Shelley Martel for failing to set standards for the care of seniors. "New Democrats expect full province-wide public hearings, because this Bill does not deliver on the single most important promise the Liberals made in the last election to the frail and elderly, to guarantee a certain level of hands-on care per resident per day for those who live in long-term care homes."

The Ontario Nurses' Association says "new legislation for long-term care facilities is missing key elements that are essential to safer long-term care environment: minimum staffing standards, improved working conditions and adequate transparency and accountability regarding how public funds are being spent."

Make Minimum Wage A Living Wage

The \$10 Minimum Wage Act, a Private Members' Bill, was introduced by NDP MPP Cheri DiNovo on the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. The Bill would raise the standard of living for Ontario's most vulnerable working families by legislating a living wage for workers.

Adjusted for inflation, Ontario's minimum wage buys less than it did three decades ago. In Ontario, about 200,000 workers earn minimum wage. Approximately 1.2 million workers earn less than \$10 an hour.



The Invisible Hand of the Free Market

"The McGuinty Liberals' minimum wage is a poverty wage. People working full-time shouldn't be living below the poverty line."

Raising the minimum wage to \$10 an hour will help many hard-working families make ends meet," DiNovo said.

"Ontario is Canada's second wealthiest province and too many families can't keep their children out of poverty. One in six children in this wealthy province live in poverty. Thousands depend on food banks. It's time we took action to end this provincial shame."

"Raising the minimum wage immediately would also be good for our local economies," DiNovo said. "Studies show people with low and moderate incomes spend their money in the community, at neighbourhood stores and on local services. Raising the minimum wage is good for all of us, including small businesses."

Liberal Finance Minister Greg Sorbara opposes the Bill, claiming small businesses in the province could not afford it. Sorbara said a \$10 minimum wage would kill jobs and increase poverty. "Those who were earning a lower minimum wage would have no wage at all," he warned after DiNovo introduced the Bill. Joining him in that view was Progressive Conservative Leader John Tory, who says a \$2 hike would be "very substantial" for companies to absorb.

KORMOS' KORNER

"A question to the Minister of Labour. On March 28, you promised to take action on independent operators who opt out of workplace safety insurance premiums. You said Ontario was threatened by a growing underground economy in construction and that workers' health and safety wasn't being protected. You announced 90 days of consultation on a plan, and that was 231 days ago. Where's the plan?"

You said that you were going to take quick-quick-action. But 231 days after your 90-day consultation period, you've got nothing to say.

As much as a third of Ontario's construction sector is in the underground economy. Let me tell you what workers are saying. They're worried that you've caved in to the pressure from business interests who want you to ignore workers' health and safety and maintain the status quo. Are you going to extend mandatory workplace safety and insurance coverage so it actually protects everyone in construction or are you going to cave in to the pressure from the business interests?"

- Peter Kormos



NDP Labour Critic
Peter Kormos

McGuinty Breaks Promise on Private Hospitals

NDP Health Critic Shelley Martel is calling on Premier Dalton McGuinty to come clean about his support of private hospital projects in Ontario.

On October 27 McGuinty attended the opening of the Royal Ottawa Mental Health Centre, which touts itself as "Canada's First Hospital to Partner with the Private Sector." The Health Care Infrastructure Company of Canada financed and built the hospital, and will provide linen, dietary, security, facility maintenance and operations services.

"Before the election Dalton McGuinty promised to stop the privatization of our hospitals," said Martel. "He made a specific promise to make the Royal Ottawa Hospital fully public. Instead, he flip-flopped. And today he's cutting the ribbon on yet another private, profit-driven hospital in Ontario."

Before the election, McGuinty criticized the Royal Ottawa Hospital deal as "a waste of money" and promised to make it fully public.

He told the Ottawa Citizen in May 2003: "What I take issue with is the mechanism. We believe in public ownership and public financing (of health care). I will take these hospitals and bring them inside the public sector."

Since his election, McGuinty has announced close to 30 private, profit-driven hospital projects across Ontario, in Barrie, Belleville, Grimsby, Hamilton, Kingston, Sarnia, London, Markham, Mississauga, North Bay, Oakville, Oshawa, Ottawa, Sault Ste. Marie, St. Catharines, Sudbury, Scarborough, Toronto, Windsor and Woodstock.

"I'm calling on Dalton McGuinty to keep his promise to make this hospital fully public," said Martel. "It's time for the McGuinty Liberals to stop putting profits before patients, stop wasting public money on private projects, and start standing up for Ontario's public hospitals – before it's too late."

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