

The Queen's Park Guide

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Did you know?

Ontario has over 42,000 km (26,000 mi) of maintained, interconnected, uncontested trails.

By going to the website www.snowmobileinontario.com you can find out information that is broken down into nine regions.

In addition, that website provides information on weather conditions and events and shows.

Additional information about snowmobiling can be acquired by going to: www.ofsc.on.ca.

This site has information about trails, permits, programs, volunteer opportunities, and other related information.

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McGuinity Government Issues Progress Report



Ontario Premier, Dalton McGuinty

On December 15, 2005, the McGuinity government released the second progress report on the Liberal's plan for students, healthcare and the economy.

Highlights of the report include:

- Education: more than 2,100 schools have reduced their primary class sizes. They are on track to have class sizes of 20 students in junior kindergarten to Grade 3 by 2007-08.
- Health: hospitals received funding to

perform 40,000 or 14.5 per cent more MRI exams in 2004-05. New investments are providing for approximately 76,800 or 24 per cent more MRI exams in 2005-06. In addition, funding was provided in 2004-05 to provide capacity for 81,300 or eight per cent more CT scans per year.

- Economy: the government is investing \$6.2 billion over five years to increase access to college and university and the quality of education provided. The government is increasing full-time enrolment in colleges and universities by 50,000 students and is committed to increasing the number of new apprenticeship registrations by 7,000 for a total of 26,000 a year by 2007-08.

New Legislation in Effect that Sets Fixed Election Dates



Ontario Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal, Marie Bountrogianni

On December 15, 2005, Marie Bountrogianni, the Minister responsible for Democratic Renewal announced that legislation that sets fixed election dates, providing real-time disclosure of political contributions, and protecting 11 ridings in the North has come into effect.

The new legislation:

- Sets scheduled election dates so they

take place every four years. The next election will be held on October 4, 2007.

- Provides for real-time public disclosure of donations to political parties and leadership candidates, retroactive to January 1, 2004. All contributions of over \$100 have to be reported to Elections Ontario within 10 business days. The public will be able to access the information on Elections Ontario's website within 10 business days after it is reported.

- Preserves 11 northern ridings and increases the number of southern ridings from 92 to 96, securing strong representation for all Ontarians in the legislature.

The Ontario Government Releases the Second in a Series of Progress Reports on Medicare



Ontario Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, George Smitherman

On December 28, 2005, Ontario's Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, George Smitherman released the second in a series of progress reports highlighting its success delivering on the key health care priorities of Ontarians.

Health care highlights in the report include:

- Improving access to family care: Doctors, nurses, nurse practitioners and other health professionals such as pharmacists, social workers and dietitians are working together to provide accessible and comprehensive care in Family Health Teams. One hundred Family Health Teams have been approved to date that will improve access to Primary health care for more than 1.7 million Ontarians in 77 communities. The number of Family Health Teams will rise to 150 by 2007-08.
- Expanding the number of family physicians: A 70 per cent increase in family medicine residency

positions at five Ontario medical schools over the next two years will result in 337 more family doctors ready to practice by 2008.

- Reducing wait times for key medical procedures: The government has provided funding for more than 240,000 additional MRI exams, CT scans, cancer surgeries, cataract and cardiac procedures and hip and knee replacements.
- Launching Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs): The government's new 14 Local Health Integration Networks are designed to allow critical health care decisions to be made at the community level, by people who best understand the needs and priorities of patients in the community. In November, the government introduced the Local Health System Integration Act which will, if passed, give LHINs the tools they need to plan, co-ordinate and fund health care services in their communities.
- Preventing illness and promoting wellness: the government has passed the Smoke-Free Ontario Act and removed junk food from elementary schools.

Ontario School Dropout Rates



Ontario Minister of Education, Gerard Kennedy

On December 16, 2005, Ontario Minister of Education Gerard Kennedy responded to the latest Statistics Canada report that tracks dropout rates among 20-24 year olds, up to six years after high school. According to Kennedy this report reinforces how serious a problem the lack of basic high school attainment is.

The report suggests that approximately half of the 22 per cent of Ontario's high school students who dropped out within five years of starting high school, subsequently obtained their qualification or were in some form of school or training within six years. The high school

dropout rate has since risen to 32 per cent in 2003-04 and then was brought down to 29 per cent in 2004-05.

The government has set a goal to reduce the percentage of high school students who drop out to 15 per cent within one year of normal graduation by 2010 through its Student Success Strategy, now entering its third phase.

"There is no reason to let students wander for six or more years before getting their credentials," Kennedy said. "We strongly believe that many more students including young men and those from rural areas or low income backgrounds can and should find improved success the first time with the right supports."

Gun Crimes

Recently, there has been heightened media awareness surrounding gun crimes. There were 52 gun related deaths in Toronto in 2005 (almost twice as many as last year). In addition, the gun violence in Toronto on Boxing Day sent shockwaves through every level of government in Ontario and has become an increasingly important issue in the federal election.

On December 29, 2005, in an open letter to Prime Minister Martin, Mr. Harper, Mr. Layton and Mr. Duceppe, Premier Dalton McGuinty asked for a commitment to amend the Criminal Code of Canada. Specifically, Premier McGuinty asked for the following changes:

- Impose a ban on handguns
- Impose a mandatory minimum sentence of four years for illegal possession of a handgun
- Impose increased mandatory minimum sentences for all gun crimes
- Create two new Criminal Code offences with mandatory minimum sentences for robbery with the intent to steal a gun and for breaking and entering with the intent to steal a gun
- Impose a reverse onus on bail for all gun crimes, and

- Set more severe penalties for any breach of bail conditions.

On January 4, 2006, senior civil servants from the City of Toronto, the provincial and federal governments and representatives of the Toronto Police Service, the OPP and the RCMP met to support the concerted effort to fight gun violence.

The working group is reviewing current initiatives and discussing potential new actions in each of the following areas:

- More effective deterrence and enforcement strategies
- Crime prevention, community development and community access to government resources
- Effective laws and policies to maximize public safety.

It is also important to note that on December 12, 2005, John Tory, Official Leader of the Opposition at Queen's Park released a 72 page report on violence affecting youth. In this report, Mr. Tory tries to strike a balance between more law enforcement, tough reforms to the justice system and more investment in the community.

McGuinty Government Raises Minimum Wage



Ontario Minister of Labour, Steve Peters

February 1, 2007.

"The increase is part of the McGuinty government's investment in people," said Peters. "By phasing in the minimum wage increases, we can help these workers benefit from Ontario's economic growth while keeping Ontario businesses competitive."

On January 11, 2006, Ontario Minister of Labour, Steve Peters announced the government is raising the minimum wage on February 1, 2006, for the third time since taking office.

The general minimum wage will be raised to \$7.75 per hour and there will be a further increase to \$8 per hour on

Other minimum wage rates will also increase on February 1, 2006. The minimum wage for:

- Students under 18 years old and employed for not more than 28 hours a week will rise from \$6.95 to \$7.25 per hour
- Liquor servers will increase from \$6.50 to \$6.75 per hour
- Hunting and fishing guides currently paid a minimum of \$37.25 for less than five consecutive hours in a day and \$74.50 for five or more hours in a day (whether or not the hours are consecutive) will also increase to \$38.75 and \$77.50 respectively.

"We are providing Ontario's lowest paid and most vulnerable workers with the third increase in the minimum wage in three years," said Peters.

Upcoming Events

Wednesday January, 18, 2006 - Ottawa South Liberal Association will be holding their Annual General Meeting. The meeting will take place at 7:00 p.m. at the Heron Multi-Service Centre.

Sunday, January 22, 2006 - Free Skate with John Yakabuski, MPP for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke from 5:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. The free skate will take place at the Paul Yakabuski Arena in Barry's Bay. Light refreshments will be served.

Sunday, January 22, 2006 - Hon. Monte Kwinter, MPP for York Centre will be hosting his Annual New Year's Levee from 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. at 539 Wilson Heights Blvd.

Wednesday, January 25, 2006 - The Burlington Provincial Association is hosting a fundraiser. The event will take place from 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. at the Water Street Cooker in Burlington. Tickets are \$200 per person or \$175 for ABC members. The special guest is the Hon. Harinder Takhar, Minister of Transportation.

Friday, January 27, 2006 - The Kingston and the Islands Ontario Liberal Association is hosting their AGM at 7:00 p.m. The AGM will take place at St. Mary's Cathedral Parish Centre in Kingston.

Friday, January 27, 2006 - The York Centre Riding Association is holding their AGM at 7:00 p.m. The AGM will take place at Mastro Ristorante Italiano at 890 Wilson Avenue in Toronto.

Friday, January 27, 2006 - The London Fanshawe Riding Association is hosting their AGM at 6:00 p.m. The event will take place at the Marconi Club. There will be an address from special guest, Marie Bountrogianni.

Saturday, January 28, 2006 - The Lambton-Kent-Middlesex PC Association is hosting a Country Curling Bonspiel at the Glencoe Curling Club. Tickets are \$200-\$250 for curling and dinner.

For more information or to acquire tickets please contact the Pathway Group.