

The Queen's Park Guide

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Did you know?

In December 2005, employment decreased in Ontario by 17,700 jobs. All of the losses were part-time positions, which fell by 28,000. Full-time jobs grew by 10,400.

The unemployment rate edged up 0.1 percentage points to 6.2% in December and the labour force participation rate declined 0.2 percentage points to 67.5% in December.

The manufacturing industry recovered slightly with the addition of 2,700 jobs in December reducing the total job loss in manufacturing to 45,400 for 2005.

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Ontario Government Announces Improvements to Newcomer Settlement Services



Ontario Citizenship and Immigration Minister, Mike Colle

On February 8, 2006, Ontario Minister of Citizenship and Immigration announced the government is increasing funding to settlement and integration services.

The funding increase of \$1.2 million annually to the Newcomer Settlement Program will bring annual provincial spending to about \$130 million on services that help newcomers get established in their communities, find jobs and housing, learn English or French, and

access community resources.

The increased investment will improve settlement services for newcomers through specialized training for front line staff in settlement agencies and will help agencies modernize their facilities and make them more welcoming.

Over 125,000 newcomers arrive in Ontario each year - nearly equivalent to the population of Prince Edward Island.

The Newcomer Settlement Program supports 79 Ontario settlement agencies that offer a wide range of settlement services, including job and language training referral.

Premier McGuinty Addresses Stakeholders at the Second Agri-Food Summit



Ontario Premier, Dalton McGuinty

On February 8, 2006, Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty spoke to producers, processors, retailers, industry, researchers, environmentalists and sector associations interested in the future of agriculture and food in Ontario.

At the second annual Agri-Food Summit, Premier McGuinty and summit attendees endorsed a vision of the agri-food sector that is "innovative, sustainable and provides opportunity for profit by all participants ... globally competitive, responsive

to consumer needs and contributing to provincial prosperity, the environment and the health of all citizens."

They discussed steps towards achieving this vision, including:

- Improved marketing aimed at broadening Ontarians' awareness of and support for the sector's high-quality, healthy and environmentally safe food products
- New business practices including the creation of more field-to-fork value chains, bringing together producers, wholesalers, manufacturers and retailers
- Research to take advantage of the long-term consumer trend to healthier, environmentally sound food choices.

Ontario Government Announces Investments to Toronto Post-Secondary Institutions



Ontario Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, Chris Bentley

On February 8, 2006, Ontario's Minister of Training, College and Universities, Chris Bentley, announced that colleges and universities in the greater Toronto area will have more teachers, learning resources and other supports due to more than \$57.2 million in additional funding from the Ontario government's Quality Improvement Fund.

Centennial College is receiving \$5.2 million to help hire full-time faculty and support staff which will result in more student contact with professors along with other initiatives.

George Brown College is receiving more than \$5.8 million, in addition to other initiatives, to help hire three new full-time faculty and 27 support staff.

Humber College is receiving more than \$6.8 million to help hire 10 new full-time faculty and

15 support staff. The college will also be investing in other initiatives.

Seneca College is receiving more than \$8 million. In part this funding will assist with hiring 19 new full-time faculty and 11 support staff.

Sheridan College is receiving more than \$5.8 million in part this will help hire nine new full-time faculty and five support staff.

The Ontario College of Art & Design (OCAD) will receive \$730,735. Part of this funding will help hire 13 new faculty members and five new support staff.

Ryerson University will receive over \$8.3 million. Part of this funding will help hire 41 new faculty members and 42 new support staff.

The University of Toronto (U of T) will receive almost \$16.5 million. Part of this funding will be used to help hire 113 new faculty members and 240 new support staff.

Ontario Government Announces Changes that will Make it Easier to Register New Parties in Ontario



Marie Bountrogianni, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal

On February 16, 2006, the Hon. Marie Bountrogianni, announced amendments that will make it easier to register new parties in Ontario.

Registration in Ontario entitles political parties to receive a number of benefits. These include having the ability to solicit contributions, issue tax receipts to contributors, request and receive a copy of the Permanent Register of Electors,

and being eligible for campaign expense reimbursements.

Under the Election Statute Law Amendment Act, 2006 a party could register:

- during an election, if it has at least two candidates in a general election or in two or more concurrent by-elections; or
- outside an election period, if it provides the Chief Election Officer with the signatures, names and addresses of at least 1,000 electors.

Ontario's current legislation requires a party to run candidates in at least 50 per cent of the province's ridings during a general election. To be successfully registered during a non-election period a party has to submit a petition to the Chief Election Officer signed by 10,000 voters.

Premier McGuinty Attends OGRA/ROMA 2006 Conference



*Ontario Premier,
Dalton McGuinty*

On February, 21, 2006, Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty addressed the Ontario Good Roads Association/Rural Ontario Municipal Association (OGRA/ROMA) 2006 Convention.

The Premier called for a federal-provincial-municipal commission to examine fiscal relations between the three levels of government.

The Premier also said the province would spend an estimated \$300 million over the next three years to achieve a 50-50 sharing of the cost of municipal land ambulance services by 2008.

McGuinty also announced he will propose four-year terms for local council members and school trustees, putting local officials on par with their provincial counterparts. If this change is adopted, four-year municipal terms could start this fall.

McGuinty Government Appoints Special Advisor on the Future of the GTA and Creative Cities

On February 17, 2006, the McGuinty government announced the appointment of John Honderich as special advisor on the future of the GTA and creative cities.

Mr. Honderich will provide counsel and advice in the areas of civic and economic development related to the Greater Toronto Area. He will also

provide advice on the role of cultural industries in creating new jobs and moving urban areas forward as creative cities of worldwide recognition. The appointment is effective February 15, 2006.

"John Honderich's knowledge and expertise will help build a more dynamic future for the GTA and a stronger province for all," said Premier McGuinty.

Highlights of the Ontario Progressive Conservative Policy Convention



*Ontario Progressive
Conservative Leader,
John Tory*

Pathway Group and over 1,000 people from Ontario traveled to the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party's 2006 Policy Convention in Niagara Falls.

The conference marks the midpoint in the party's policy process leading up to the next convention and focused on listening and reaching out to Ontarians.

At the convention, it was announced that riding organization is steadily strengthening with candidate search underway across the province. It was also announced that the party's finances are improving with the debt being reduced to \$4 million. The party's debt was over \$10 million at the start of John Tory's election as leader just 17

months ago. The PC Party is expecting to eliminate the debt by the end of this year.

Participants spent their time listening to a number of speakers and discussing 6 policy papers on Prosperity, Health Care, Our Children's Future, Energy, Strong Rural and Northern Communities.

"The success of the conference this weekend was because it was open and transparent", said Ontario Progressive Conservative Leader John Tory. "It was about real people discussing real ideas about the issues that matter most to them. Thanks to the workbooks we were handing out we will have hundreds of pages of grassroots input that will help us in building Ontario's new foundations."

Ontario Government Invests in Apprenticeship Training



Ontario Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, Chris Bentley

On February 13, 2006, Ontario Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, Chris Bentley, announced the government is investing in college training labs to help train more apprentices.

The government is investing \$10 million this year to help apprentice-training labs at Ontario colleges purchase up-to-date equipment and train more apprentices to the standards set by industry.

The government also launched a 30-second television ad today that shows apprentices contributing to different sectors of the economy. The ad also reminds employers of the Apprenticeship Training Tax Credit that provides refundable tax credits on a portion of the salaries and wages paid to eligible apprentices.

Ontario has the largest apprenticeship training system in Canada. Apprenticeship training will be a key feature of Ontario's One-Stop Training and Employment System.

Upcoming Events

Thursday, March 2, 2006 - The Ontario Liberal Heritage Dinner 2006 will take place at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. Tickets are \$8,000 per table.

Tuesday, March 21, 2006 - The Hon. George Smitherman is hosting a fundraising event at the Steam Whistle Brewing Company in Toronto. The event will take place from 5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$200 per person.

Wednesday, March 29, 2006 - Ontario PC Leader, John Tory is having his Hamilton reception at the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce. Tickets are \$250 per person.

Thursday, April 6, 2006 - 20th Anniversary Gerry Phillips Red Trillium Dinner. The reception will start at 6:30 p.m. and the dinner will start at 7:30 p.m. The dinner will take place at the Delta Toronto East Hotel.

Thursday, April 20, 2006 - Brampton Centre Provincial Liberal Association fundraiser with Linda Jeffrey, MPP. The event will take place at the Lion Head Golf and Country Club in Brampton. The special guest will be the Hon. George Smitherman. Further details are TBD.

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

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