

The Queen's Park Guide

Volume 2, Issue 5

March 9, 2006

Test your Knowledge of Canadian Trivia:

- 1) Where was the first hockey game played?
- 2) What is Canada's largest easterly ice-free port?
- 3) Which was the 10th province to join the Canadian Confederation?
- 4) Who was Canada's youngest Prime Minister?
- 5) What was Canada's claim to fame at the 1976 summer Olympics in Montreal?

Answers are on the last page of the Guide.

Inside this issue:

Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System	1
Highway 407	1
Ontario By-Elections	2
Local Health Integration Networks	2
Student Access Guarantee	3
New Labour Legislation Introduced	3
Upcoming Events	4

Changes to the Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System



Ontario Minister of Municipal Affairs & Housing, John Gerretsen

On February 23, 2006, Ontario Municipal Affairs & Housing Minister, John Gerretsen announced the Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System (OMERS) is now controlled by its members.

The Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System Act, 2006 is now law and gives the more than 355,000 working and retired Ontarians who pay into and benefit from the plan, and their employers,

control over their pensions.

The new model requires the creation of supplemental benefits plans for police, fire-fighters and paramedics, and enables it for other employee groups.

The government is proposing legislation mandating a review of the new OMERS governance model by 2012. The review would focus on the fairness, accountability and efficiency of the Sponsors Corporation.

To keep the costs associated with the supplemental benefits plan reasonable for employees and employers, the legislation states that only one supplemental benefit can be negotiated every three years.

McGuinty Government Fails in Court of Appeal Decision



Ontario Minister of Transportation, Harinder Takhar

On February 24, 2006, Ontario Minister of Transportation, Harinder Takhar issued a news release stating that the Ontario Court of Appeal denied the province's leave to appeal the divisional court ruling regarding plate denial for outstanding 407 ETR debts.

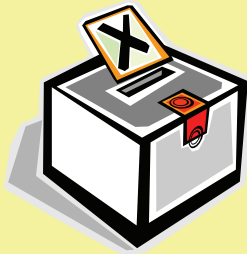
The Ontario government has said that they believe that denying someone the right to renew their licence plate

significantly affects their quality of life. The government also said that "it's even more serious when it occurs through no fault of their own, but because the 407 ETR electronic system made a mistake."

The province and 407 ETR agreed in February 2000 that plate denial would be suspended until 407 ETR's systems were working properly. 407 ETR launched a judicial review on July 23, 2004, calling for the Registrar to immediately enforce plate denial.

On November 22, 2005, the Government sought leave to appeal the decision to plate deny which has since been denied. The government has said that they will respect the court's decision.

Three Ontario By-elections to Take Place on March 30th



Ontario by-elections to be held in three Ontario ridings.

On March 1, 2006, writs were issued under the Election Act for provincial by-elections in the electoral districts of Nepean-Carleton, Toronto-Danforth and Whitby-Ajax. These vacancies were all created by MPPs who ran for office in the recent federal election.

In Toronto-Danforth, the Ontario Liberal Party has nominated former broadcast journalist Ben Chin as their candidate. The Ontario Progressive Conservative Party has nominated Greek restaurateur Georgina Blanas. The Ontario New Democratic Party (NDP) has nominated Peter Tabuns as their candidate. The proposed gas powered hydro plant in this riding is becoming a focal point of the campaign. Since Minister Cansfield announced this initiative, the NDP have been leading the opposition to this proposal. It is widely expected that the NDP candidate will once again win this riding.

In Whitby-Ajax, the Ontario Liberal Party has nominated well-known, former MP, Judi Longfield. The Ontario Progressive Conservative Party has nominated Christine Elliott. The Ontario NDP have nominated Judy Gladman. Expect the Ontario Liberals to question two members of the same family acting as elected officials in this riding. Christine Elliott is the wife of Federal Finance Minister, Jim Flaherty. It appears to be shaping up as a two way battle between Longfield and Elliott. This riding it is too close to call at the present time.

In Nepean-Carleton, the Ontario Liberal Party has nominated former Ottawa Police Chief Brian Ford. The Ontario Progressive Conservative Party has nominated Lisa MacLeod. MacLeod is expected to utilize the support of federal MP Pierre Poilievre, as she was his assistant. The Ontario NDP have nominated Laurel Gibbons. It is anticipated that Lisa MacLeod will be able to, once again, secure this seat for the Ontario Conservatives.

Voting Day will be Thursday March 30, 2006.

Ontario Government Strengthens the Role of Local Health Integration Networks



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

On March 1, 2006, Ontario Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, George Smitherman announced the Ontario government is providing Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) with new powers through legislation, which has now received third and final reading.

After receiving Royal Assent, the Local Health System Integration Act, 2006, will give the 14 LHINs in the province the power to plan, integrate and fund local health services -- including hospitals, Community Care Access Centres, Community

Health Centres, as well as home care, long-term care, mental health, addiction and community support services -- for their specific geographic areas.

The networks will allow local communities and health care providers to work together to identify local priorities, plan health services and deliver them in a more coordinated fashion. The government would continue to set strategic directions and provincial standards for high-quality, accessible health care.

"LHINs will break down the barriers faced by patients trying to find the health care services they need because those services will be better coordinated," Smitherman said.

Ontario Government Announces Student Access Guarantee



Ontario Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, Chris Bentley

On March 8, 2006, Ontario Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, Chris Bentley announced the Ontario government is providing a student access guarantee that means no qualified Ontario student will be prevented from attending Ontario's public colleges and universities due to lack of financial support programs.

Institutions will have more flexibility to set fees, but only within this capped, regulated and predictable framework.

Under the plan, average tuition increases for the coming year will be limited to about \$100 for almost 90 per cent of college students and about \$200 for almost 70 per cent of university students. Increases in tuition fees may vary, but the majority of undergraduate students will see increases below 4.5 per cent. Tuition will be allowed to increase by a maximum average of up to five per cent at each institution.

Under the guarantee, the government will provide assistance to almost 200,000 students from lower- and middle-income families. Institutions that want to increase fees may do so only if two conditions are met: they participate in the student access guarantee, and any fee increases improve the quality of programs.

For professional, graduate and certain other programs, institutions may increase fees up to a maximum of eight per cent in the first year of study, but only if the institutional average is five per cent or less, the student access guarantee is in place, and the money buys improvement in quality. Increases will be limited to four per cent in subsequent years of study.

The student contribution will come from a regulated tuition framework. Increases will be capped, predictable and linked to improvements in quality and access.

"We aim to give students the best postsecondary education possible," said Bentley.

McGuinty Government Introduces New Legislation Aimed at Improving Public Protection and Safety



Ontario Labour Minister, Steve Peters

On February 27, 2006, Ontario Labour Minister, Steve Peters introduced legislation that, if passed, would improve the way provincial ministries, agencies and inspectors work together to keep the public, workers, natural resources, and fish and wildlife safe.

monitor businesses that put the public at risk by violating Ontario laws.

This legislation is one part of a three-part strategy to improve the way businesses comply with laws that protect people, natural resources and the environment in Ontario. The other components of the government's modernization plan include:

Currently, 13 different ministries and agencies enforce a wide variety of laws to keep the public safe in Ontario. If passed, the Regulatory Modernization Act, 2006, would enable staff from all 13 ministries and other agencies to share information and work together to ensure that businesses comply with provincial laws. It would also help the government

- Developing strategies that would recognize companies with exceptional records of compliance - while targeting enforcement efforts at businesses that continually violate Ontario laws
- Launching a pilot project that would provide "easy-to-understand" toolkits to small businesses.

Upcoming Events

Monday, March 20, 2006 - The Hon. Jim Watson and the Ottawa West-Nepean Ontario Liberal Association are hosting a fundraising reception with special guest, the Hon. John Gerretsen. The reception will take place from 5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. at the Rideau Club, 99 Bank Street, 15th floor. Tickets are \$250 each.

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.

Tuesday, March 28, 2006 - Dr. Marie Bountrogianni is hosting a cocktail reception with special guest the Hon. Joe Cordiano. The reception will take place from 6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. at Downtown Fine Cars in Toronto. Tickets are \$250 each.

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.

Wednesday, April 11, 2006 - Ontario PC Leader, John Tory is hosting his Thunder Bay Dinner at the Valhalla Inn. The reception will start at 5:30 p.m. and the dinner will commence at 6:30 p.m. Tickets are \$200 each.

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.

Thursday, May 4, 2006 - Ontario PC Leader, John Tory is hosting his Toronto dinner at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. Individual tickets range from \$750 - \$1,400 each. Tables of ten range from \$7,500 - \$14,000.

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

Canadian Trivia Answers (From Page 1): 1) Kingston in 1855; 2) Halifax; 3) Newfoundland in 1867; 4) Joe Clark; 5) Canada became the only country not to have won any gold medals as Olympic hosts.