

# The Queen's Park Guide

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## Did you know?

Ontario's labour market gained 11,400 jobs in July. The job gains were the result of an increase in part-time employment by 25,100, which was partially offset by a loss of 13,700 full-time jobs. The unemployment rate edged up to 6.6% in July from 6.5% in June.

Nationally, employment grew by 11,300 in July. The national unemployment rate edged down 0.1 percentage points to 6.0%, the lowest since 1976.

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## Solar heating



On November 20, 2007 Ontario's Energy Minister, Gerry Phillips an-

nounced a program that will provide businesses with up to \$80,000 to install solar heating systems.

Ontario is rapidly increasing its use of solar energy, with over 100 contracts signed for potential solar energy projects across the province.

The Ontario Solar Thermal Heating Incentive matches rebates

provided by the federal ecoENERGY for Renewable Heat program. Each program provides up to 25 per cent of the cost of purchasing and installing a solar hot water or solar air heating system, to a maximum of \$80,000.

In Canada's commercial and institutional sectors, up to 10 per cent of energy use is for water heating and over 50 per cent is for space heating. This program will support the installation of solar systems that offset both of these loads. For space heating, savings from solar systems can approach 50 per cent of building heating loads.

## Family literacy centres



On November 16, 2007 Premier Dalton McGuinty announced the government will extend support to Parenting and Family Literacy Centres outside of Toronto for the first time.

For 2007-08, the government is investing \$6 million in 89 centres across Ontario — 54 existing centres in Toronto and 35 new

new centres across the province.

Located in high-needs communities, the centres focus on building children's literacy and numeracy skills through stories, music, reading and activities. The centres are open to children up to six years old who attend with a parent or caregiver.

**"We need every one of our students at their best so we can keep building a stronger Ontario," said McGuinty.**

## Remembrance Day



On Remembrance Day, Premier Dalton McGuinty joined Ontarians in honouring Canada's veterans by attending the Ceremony of Remembrance at Ontario's Veterans' Memorial.

The Premier joined veterans, members of the Canadian Forces, cadets and observed at 11 a.m. The traditional service also included a 21-gun salute, the reading of "In Flanders Fields" and the laying of wreaths at the memorial.

**"We come together, as Canadians, from coast to coast to coast, to remember the valour, service and sacrifice of all the brave men and women who have fought and died for this magnificent country, the ideal of freedom and the cause of**

**of peace," said Premier McGuinty.**

Also, on November 9, 2007, Premier McGuinty formally honoured the heroism, valour and sacrifice of Ontario's fallen soldiers by presenting Tribute to the Fallen plaques to the families of Canadian Forces personnel who lost their lives in the line of duty. Ontario's Tribute to the Fallen honours members of the Canadian Forces, firefighters and police officers in Ontario who have died in the line of duty.

**"Today, Canadians are again fighting for the principles we hold dear and sometimes paying the ultimate price," said Premier McGuinty. "We have a duty to support their families and to hope and pray for their safe return - because the greatest tribute we can pay to our veterans is to protect the values they fought for and continue building the strong, free country they loved."**

## Ontario's representation in the House of Commons



On November 14, 2007 Premier McGuinty released the following statement:

"Today, the federal government introduced legislation that would change the number of seats in the House of Commons. This legislation is of great concern to me, to my government and to all Ontarians.

It will weaken democratic representation for Canadians living in Ontario by granting us fewer seats than we are entitled to in the House of Commons. It will undermine some of our most cherished democratic rights: representation by population; one person, one vote; equality under the law and effective representation.

When important national decisions are made, Ontarians will not have the same right to have their voices heard, or their views count compared to Canadians living in B.C., Alberta or Quebec. In fact, Ontarians will have weaker representation in the federal Parliament than Canadians living anywhere else in Canada.

Given Ontario's growing population, the proposed legislation makes little sense. Under these changes, both Alberta and B.C. will get a new seat in the readjustment following the 2011 Census for every increase of approximately 100,000 people. However, Ontario will get only one new seat for roughly every 200,000 people.

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## Tax exemption on bicycles and bicycle helmets



On November 9, 2007 Premier Dalton McGuinty said starting on December 1, 2007, the Ontario government will exempt bike helmets and other safety equipment from retail sales tax (RST).

Bikes costing \$1,000 or less will also be exempted.

**"We want to encourage more Ontarians - young and young-at-heart - to get outdoors, spend time riding bikes as a family and with friends, or to try riding to work if possible, leaving the car at home," said Premier McGuinty.**

"Increasing the affordability of quality bikes for children, youth and those considering cycle commuting sets the stage for a lifetime of cycling," said Pete Lilly, President of the Bicycle Trade Association of Canada.

## Ontario venture capital fund

On November 14, 2007 Premier Dalton McGuinty announced a new \$165-million Ontario Venture Capital Fund to help create jobs by boosting cutting-edge companies.

The Ontario government has signed a letter of intent with leading Canadian institutional investors — including OMERS Administration Corporation, RBC Capital Partners, Business Development Bank of Canada and Manulife Financial — to create the new fund.

Ontario is investing \$90 million in this first round of the fund, with the remaining \$75 million coming from the partner investors. In round two, the government will seek additional private sector investors to grow the fund.

**"I am pleased that successful corporate and institutional investors on the leading edge of Ontario's economy are working with us to invest in Ontario's future," said Minister of Research and Innovation John Wilkinson.**

## Environmental toxins



On November 20, 2007 a group of parents and children gathered at Queen's Park to mark National Child Day and draw particular attention to chemicals found in plastic baby bottles and other similar products.

Premier Dalton McGuinty responded by telling parents about the Ontario government's new toxins reduction strategy. This will

include the introduction of new toxic reduction legislation to reduce pollution, inform and protect Ontarians from toxic chemicals in the air, water, land and consumer products.

The Ontario government will appoint an expert medical and scientific panel to advise which toxins should be the focus of immediate attention, action and reductions as the new toxic reduction legislation is developed.

## Ontario's representation in the House of Commons

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As time goes by, Ontarians would become increasingly under-represented with each new readjustment following a census.

For more than a decade, the governments of Canada's three fastest-growing provinces — B.C., Alberta and Ontario — have stood together and asked the federal government to restore the principle of representation by population. In 2006, the federal government promised to do so.

The legislation introduced today breaks that commitment. It would benefit Canadians living in B.C. and Alberta, but not Ontarians.

Ontarians are proudly Canadian. Yet for 20 years, we have seen our federal representation decline even as our population has grown rapidly.

We must have fair and equal standing in the House of Commons. Equal representation is the best safeguard to ensure that laws debated and passed by the national Parliament properly reflect the will of the people and are viewed as legitimate by Canadians from all regions of the country.

Ontarians accept that Canadians in smaller provinces or those with slower population growth may need protection for their existing number of seats in the federal Parliament. However, providing citizens in Ontario with less representation than citizens in Alberta or B.C. is unjust.

All Canadians should oppose the federal government's plan to entrench in the Constitution a gradual disenfranchisement of the

of the citizens of any province.

The Ontario government is surprised and disappointed that the federal government has chosen to weaken the voting rights of Ontarians. That is why our government will take all necessary measures to halt this constitutional amendment.

We also believe that changes to the Senate as proposed in new federal legislation cannot be undertaken unilaterally by the federal government. Such changes require the consent of the provinces as outlined in the general amending formula of the Canadian Constitution.

Now is not the time to thrust the country into a lengthy constitutional process of Senate reform. Ontarians do not support reopening the constitution at this time, and we again urge the federal government to refrain from embarking on this risky and distracting path. If the federal government insists on pursuing Senate reform, our preference is abolition.

During my first mandate, I fought hard to ensure that Ontario received fair treatment from the federal government in fiscal transfers. After decades of being short-changed fiscally, we have made real progress. But there is still more work to be done, and I will continue to stand up for fiscal fairness.

As Premier, I also have a responsibility to protect the fundamental democratic rights of Ontarians. I will stand up for fair and equal treatment under the constitution for all Ontarians — and will not stand by while those rights are eroded."

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