

The Queen's Park Guide

Volume 3, Issue 18

December 6, 2007

Did you know?

Ontario's employment grew by 9,300 jobs in August following an increase of 11,400 in July. The unemployment rate edged down to 6.4% in August from 6.6% in July.

Across Canada employment increased by a solid 23,300 in August. Employment growth outside Ontario mainly took place in B.C. (8,300) and Newfoundland and Labrador (3,000). The national unemployment remained at its 31-year-low level of 6%.

Inside this issue:

Smart Consumer Calendar	1
Military families	1
International literacy study	2
Full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds	2
Manufacturing	3
Union of Ontario Indians Assembly	3
Trans fats	3
Drinking water	4
New advisory council on health care issues	4

2008 Smart Consumer Calendar now available



On November 27, 2007 Government and Consumer Services Minister

Ted McMeekin launched the annual smart consumer calendar.

McMeekin launched this year's calendar at Ryerson University's Ted Rogers School of Management. The ministry's co-sponsors and partners joined the Minister, including Toronto Police Service Staff Inspector Stephen Harris, unit commander of the Fraud Squad and chair of the Toronto Strategic Partnership on cross-

border fraud, Ryerson University President Sheldon Levy, and several business students who are today's young consumers and tomorrow's marketplace leaders.

"Ontario has become a leader in consumer protection, and we are determined to keep it that way for generations to come," said McMeekin. "That's why our 2008 Smart Consumer Calendar features valuable information that will help young consumers as they enter the work world, borrow money, purchase their first car or buy a home."

Military families



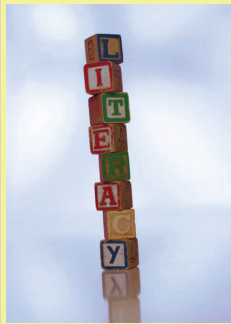
On December 3, 2007 the Ontario government introduced legislation that would, if passed, provide immediate access to OHIP for eligible military families and protect the jobs of reservists who are called up to duty.

The legislation, if passed, would also remove the 90-day waiting period for services insured under

OHIP for military families. Military families transferred to Ontario from other provinces or from overseas are sometimes required to pay physician fees up front during the waiting period.

The proposed legislation would also ensure that military reservists have job protection while on a tour of duty either at home or abroad. There are about 12,000 reservists from Ontario, with several hundred serving abroad at any one time.

Ontario students rank among the top students in the world in reading



On November 28, 2007 Ontario results of the 2006 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) were released by the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO). PIRLS is a world-

wide reading literacy assessment of Grade 4 students undertaken every five years and sponsored by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA).

A total of 45 jurisdictions representing 40 countries participated in the 2006 administration of PIRLS. Ontario took part in the study along with four other provinces in Canada: Alberta, British Columbia, Nova Scotia and Quebec, and other jurisdictions such as

England and the United States.

Ontario's nine- and ten-year-old students rank among the top students in the world in reading. Only the Russian Federation and Hong Kong were in a performance range higher than Ontario's. Eight other jurisdictions were in the same performance range as Ontario. Ontario's students have sustained their high level of performance in reading since PIRLS 2001 and narrowed the gender achievement gap.

"I'd like to congratulate the students, parents and educators for the work they've done to achieve these great results," said Minister Wynne. "The high scores of Ontario students are a validation of the past few years' hard work to help increase student achievement and support students in their learning through our Literacy and Numeracy Strategy."

Full-day learning for four-and five-year-olds



On November 27, 2007 Premier Dalton McGuinty announced the Ontario government has appointed Dr. Charles Pascal to recommend the best

way to implement full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds.

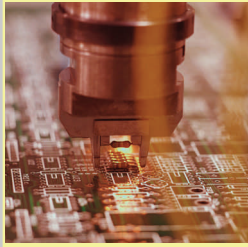
Dr. Pascal is the executive director of the Atkinson Foundation, a charitable foundation dedicated to economic and social justice and Chair of the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO). He has extensive experience in the education sector as a former president of Sir Sandford Fleming College and in taking on significant roles in different

provincial governments.

In 1987, he was appointed Chair of the Ontario Council of Regents, the government's chief policy and planning body for the colleges of applied arts and technology. In 1991, he became the Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Community and Social Services and later the Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Education and Training.

A recent Rutgers University study showed that four-year-olds in full-time learning programs scored consistently higher in math and language skills. It found that full-time learning has dramatic and lasting effects on children's learning across a broad range of knowledge and skills.

Ramsay to review challenges faced by small - and medium - sized manufacturers



On November 30, 2007 Premier Dalton McGuinty announced Timiskaming-Cochrane MPP David Ramsay will review the competitiveness challenges facing Ontario's small- and medium-sized

manufacturers and propose near-term policies to address these challenges.

Ontario's manufacturers have faced several

challenges recently, including increasing global competition, a rapidly rising Canadian dollar, high interest rates and slowing economic growth in the United States.

Ramsay will review competitive challenges and drivers facing Ontario's manufacturers. He will also examine how other jurisdictions have responded and propose measures to assist manufacturing-based communities, including smaller (less than 25,000 residents) and northern communities.

Bryant addresses Union of Ontario Indians Assembly

On November 27, 2007 Michael Bryant, Ontario's Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, said his aim is to further strengthen the Ontario government's partnership with the Union of Ontario Indians (UOI) so that they can continue to work together for a better future for First Nations communities in Ontario.

"We want to set out a road map to improve living conditions, expedite claims and get moving in a very practical way

when it comes to these and other long-standing issues," said Bryant, speaking at the Union of Ontario Indians Assembly held at the Ketegaunseebee First Nation (Garden River) at Sault Ste. Marie.

The Union of Ontario Indians, led by Grand Chief John Beaucage, represents 42 First Nations from Thunder Bay and Lake Nipigon in the north, Sarnia in the south and Golden Lake in the east.

Ontario to make schools trans fat free



On December 4, 2007 Premier Dalton McGuinty announced the Ontario government is making schools healthier by moving to drop trans fat from lunchroom menus and vending machines.

Trans fat is often found in french fries, some cookies and other cafeteria foods. The processed oil can contribute to childhood obesity.

The rate of obesity in kids has tripled over the past twenty-five years. Most obese children become overweight adults, putting them at higher risk for diabetes and heart disease.

Under the proposal, Ontario would move to exempt some foods that naturally contain small amounts of trans fat, including beef, lamb and milk.

"Our kids health is just too important to risk," said Premier Dalton McGuinty.

Funding for drinking water stewardship



On December 3, 2007 Environment Minister John Gerretsen and Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Minister Leona Dombrowsky

announced the Ontario government is providing \$7 million to help farmers, property owners and businesses take steps now to protect local drinking water sources.

Of this initial \$7 million:

- \$4 million is helping with the costs of measures taken in areas around municipal wells and water intakes such as upgrading wells and septic systems, installing runoff and erosion controls and reviews aimed at

improving how businesses store, handle and dispose of materials.

- \$2 million is for promoting awareness of what individuals and businesses can do and the funding available to them.

- \$1 million is going to special projects to protect municipal drinking water sources including those that demonstrate a new or innovative approach.

An advisory panel including agricultural, municipal and conservation authority representatives provided advice to guide the development and ongoing operation of the Ontario Drinking Water Stewardship Program including the types of activities that should be funded.

New advisory council on health care issues facing Ontario's Francophone community



On November 26, 2007 Deputy Premier and Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman and Madeleine Meilleur, Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs, announced the Ontario government is creating a new advisory

council on health care issues facing the province's Francophone community.

The French Language Health Services Advisory Council is mandated under the Local Health System Integration Act (LHSIA). The council will provide advice to the Minister about health and service delivery issues related to Francophone communities, and

ongoing development of policies and strategies that contribute towards helping Franco-Ontarians access, in French, the care they need.

The Council will receive financial and administrative support from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

"I look forward to representing the Francophone community," said M. Jean-Gilles Pelletier, newly named Chair. "The members of the committee come from all regions of Ontario. We will work together to provide informed advice towards the ongoing development of provincial health care policies and strategies."

PathwayGroup

One Dundas Street W., Suite 2500, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5G 1Z3

(t) 416.979.4617
(f) 416.204.1939