

The Queen's Park Guide

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Did you know?

Ontario's employment grew by 29,700 jobs in September. Full-time employment grew by 37,500, while there was a decline of 7,800 in part-time employment.

In Ontario, the unemployment rate dropped by 0.2% to 6.2%.

Nationally, employment increased by 51,100 in September.

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Consumers can call gift card hotline with questions or complaints



Government and Consumer Services Minister, Ted McMeekin, said the Ontario government is making a list and checking it twice to assure consumers that Ontario retailers are complying with the province's ban on gift card expiry dates.

The Ontario government's ban on gift card expiry dates came into effect on October 1, 2007. To further ensure that consumers get what they pay for, the new rules

prohibit fees or deductions from a card's value, often charged for "inactivity", which is another way of expiring a gift card.

"Gift cards are becoming increasingly popular during the holidays, especially as stocking stuffers," said McMeekin. "And we want Ontario consumers to know that gift cards are worth the money they paid for them, regardless of when those cards are used."

If you have a question or complaint regarding the ban, you can call the consumer hotline at 1-800-889-9768 or 416-326-8800.

Cultural attractions for the holiday season



Minister of Culture, Aileen Carroll, is encouraging Ontarians to take advantage of the diverse range of activities the province's many cultural attractions offer during the winter holiday season.

Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto
The new James and Louise Temerty Galleries of the Age of

Dinosaurs are officially open. Call (416) 586-5549 for more information.

Royal Botanical Gardens, Hamilton

Santa is making daily appearances until December 23. In addition, they are hosting Family Discover Days on December 27 and 28. For more information, call (905) 527-1158, ext. 2796.

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Assistance for cattle, hog and horticulture producers



On December 14, 2007 Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Leona Dombrowsky said the Ontario government is

moving quickly to provide \$150 million to strengthen competitiveness and help Ontario cattle, hog and horticulture farmers suffering from multiple financial pressures.

The funding, announced in the 2007 Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review, will help farmers manage the effects of lower returns due to higher input costs, the stronger Canadian dollar and lower market prices. This funding builds on the \$135 million provided earlier this year to assist grain and oilseed farmers compete and succeed in the global economy.

A total of \$130 million of the funding will go directly to approximately 13,000 farmers to help them deal with the immediate challenges presented by current economic conditions and the long-term impacts of BSE. Of this total, about \$100 million will be provided to cattle and hog producers, while about \$30 million will be delivered to horticulture producers. The remaining \$20 million will go toward a variety of initiatives aimed at creating a more sustainable future for the sector. Payments are scheduled to be delivered to producers beginning in February, 2008.

"We know the need is great now. This announcement will allow farmers to consider this funding as part of their business decisions. We want the money to get to farmers as early as possible," Dombrowsky said.

New driver licence cards will have improved security features



Transportation Minister Jim Bradley announced beginning in December, the government will begin to issue more secure

driver licence cards that will protect Ontarians from identity theft.

The new card incorporates leading edge security features such as laser engraved photo/signature/personal information, a fine line background, 2D barcode, micro and rainbow printing, secondary photo and signature images and ultraviolet features among others.

These changes bring Ontario in line with new standards for North American driver's

licences developed by the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators.

"The card also uses a secure platform that can be enhanced in the future to include citizenship information," said Bradley. "The province is working towards enabling Ontarians to use their driver's licence as a border-crossing document."

Giesecke & Devrient (G&D), in Markham, is producing the card. The company is a global leader in advanced technology for secure identification. G&D produces secure document design for passports, licences, payment transactions and currency for governments around the world.

Cultural attractions for the holiday season

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Ontario Science Centre, Toronto

Titanic: The Artifact Exhibition tells the Titanic story as it has never been told before. Real artifacts recovered from nearly 4 km below the ocean tell Titanic's fate-

ful tale along with the stories of the 2,228 souls who journeyed with her into history. Also, the IMAX® Dome theatre, is featuring Titanica, which brings the world's most famous shipwreck to life through images from the ocean floor. Finally, the The KidsSpark holiday program lets the young set learn about the kind of toys that were popular when the Titanic sailed. For more information call (416) 696-1000.

Science North, Sudbury

On December 27 and 28, Dynamic Earth is featuring an exciting holiday camp where kids can play MINEopoly, a fun way to learn about geology, mining and mineral

identification. Kids can also explore Holiday Science at Science North Christmas Camps for Kids. For more information, call (705) 523-4629.

Ontario Heritage Trust's Elgin Theatre, Toronto

Based on the stage play by J.M. Barrie Peter Pan, The Family Musical That Won't Grow Up follows the adventures of Peter, Captain Hook, Tinker Bell and Wendy. Performances run to January 6, 2008. For further information call 416-872-5555.

McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg

Along with the spectacular collection of works by The Group of Seven, families can also enjoy special exhibitions Miller Brittain: When the Stars Threw Down Their Spears and Stones, Bones and Stitches. As part of McMichael's Holiday Bonus Family Days program, parents and kids alike can enjoy hands-on art activities and live entertainment on December 27 and 28. For more information call (905) 893-1121.

Shelly Jamieson to become the next Secretary of the Cabinet

Premier Dalton McGuinty recently announced Shelly Jamieson will be the next Secretary of the Cabinet, Head of the Ontario Public Service and Clerk of the Executive Council. This appointment is scheduled to take effect on January 7, 2008.

Jamieson, Deputy Minister of Transportation since January 2006, is a former President of Extendicare Canada Inc. and a former Executive Director of the Ontario Nursing Home Association (now the Ontario Long-Term Care Association).

“Shelly Jamieson brings to this enormously important position a wealth of experience and a passion for public service that I know will serve Ontarians well and help our government move our province forward,” Premier McGuinty said.

Jamieson will succeed Tony Dean, who recently announced he is leaving the post in January after serving as the Secretary of the Cabinet, Head of the Ontario Public Service and Clerk of the Executive Council since November 2002.

Climate change



On December 12, 2007 Environment Minister John Gerretsen announced the Ontario government is receiving scientific advice as part of its climate change plan.

The advice will come from members of an Expert Panel on Climate Change Adaptation, co-chaired by Dr. Ian Burton, Emeritus Professor University of Toronto, and Dr. David Pearson, Professor of Earth Sciences, Laurentian University.

The panel will consist of eleven leading scientists and environmental experts. Dr. Ian Burton, Dr. Gord McBean and Dr. Barry Smit all received a share of the Nobel Peace prize for their recent work on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report.

"The McGuinty government is committed to a greener Ontario. We are cutting emissions, but we also have to be prepared for the consequences we can't avoid," said Gerretsen.

Anticipated impacts of climate change in Ontario include:

- a drop in the Great Lakes water levels;
- increased risk to the province's northern forests and species;
- droughts or severe floods;
- more invasive pest species;
- increased incidence of poor air quality days and hot weather-related health problems such as heat stress.

The ministry also committed \$220,000 to the Ontario Centre for Climate Impacts and

Adaptation Resources. Based in Laurentian University in Sudbury, the centre will deliver resources and outreach activities related to climate change impacts and adaptation in Ontario. The project will build partnerships and deliver information and education through workshops for municipalities and other Ontario stakeholders on the science of climate change, and an Adaptation Kit for Municipalities to mainstream climate change adaptation into the decision-making process.

Panel members are:

- Grand Council Chief John Beaucage, Grand Council Anishinabek Nation
- Alain Bourque, Ouranos
- Dr. Quentin Chiotti, Pollution Probe
- Dr. Judith Guernsey, Dalhousie University
- David Lapp, Engineers Canada
- Eva Ligeti, Executive Director, Clean Air Partnership
- Dr. Gord McBean, University of Western Ontario
- Jo-Ellen Parry, International Institute for Sustainable Development
- Dr. Barry Smit, University of Guelph

"This is an extremely important Ontario initiative. It is imperative that we begin to adapt to the impacts of climate change as well as controlling greenhouse gas emissions," said Dr. Burton. "Adaptation has an important role to play in reducing the vulnerability of ecosystems and species, people's health, their livelihoods and communities, and activities in many sectors of the economy, including resource management and infrastructure design and standards."

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