

# The Queen's Park Guide

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## Did you know?

In November 2007, 4,900 jobs were lost in Ontario. The unemployment rate increased to 6.2% in November from 6.0% in October.

Nationally, employment increased by a strong 42,600 jobs. As more people entered the labour force, the unemployment rate increased to 5.9% in November from 5.8% in October.

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## Cosmetic pesticides



On January 18, 2008 Environment Minister John Gerretsen announced the

Ontario government is beginning the first stage of consultations with Ontarians on how to shape legislation banning the cosmetic use of pesticides.

A Notice of Proposal has been posted to the Environmental Registry inviting the public to provide initial comments. The registry is at [www.ebr.gov.on.ca](http://www.ebr.gov.on.ca), registry number 010-2248. At the same time, the ministry will seek input from

health and environmental groups, agriculture, golf courses, municipalities, the pesticides industry, retailers and others.

The public will be invited to comment on the proposed legislation within the next couple of months.

**"Just as we replaced a patchwork of local bylaws when we banned smoking province-wide, a cosmetic pesticide ban would create a single, comprehensive law for all Ontario communities that would better protect our health and the health of our kids," Gerretsen said.**

## Clothesline restrictions



On January 21, 2008 Energy Minister Gerry Phillips announced the Ontario government is moving to end the bans that prevent some Ontarians from hanging their laundry

out to dry.

In some areas of Ontario, builders' covenants or other restrictions don't allow outdoor clotheslines. The government is asking

the public for input on how to best end these restrictions through a 60-day posting on Ontario's Environmental Registry at [www.ebr.gov.on.ca](http://www.ebr.gov.on.ca).

The government's proposal would permit the use of clotheslines and/or clothes umbrellas for occupants of any freehold detached, semi-detached or row house. The government is also consulting with stakeholders in the condominium and high-rise sectors to assess how to potentially proceed in those environments.

## Solar Task Force



A new task force will help Ontario meet its target of 100,000 solar systems installed in households across the province.

Premier Dalton McGuinty announced last June that Ontario was setting a target of 100,000 installed solar systems, as part of the government's "Go Green" climate change strategy.

Most Ontario households spend about 20 per cent of their overall energy budget on water heating - that's second only to space heating.

By supplementing existing electric or gas water heaters, solar thermal systems can dramatically reduce these costs. For example, each year a solar thermal system can save:

- \$325 and 600 kilograms of greenhouse gas emissions for a typical family of four with an electric water heater
- \$200 and 760 kilograms of greenhouse gas emissions for a typical family of four with a gas water heater

The Solar Task Force members are:

- Elizabeth McDonald, Executive Director, Canadian Solar Industries Association
- Brian Rosborough, Director of Policy, Association of Municipalities of Ontario
- Rob McMonagle, Senior Energy Consultant, Energy Efficiency Office, City of Toronto
- Larry Brydon, Senior Account Executive, Reliance Home Comfort

The task force has been asked to focus on how to expand the residential solar thermal market.

## Fire sprinklers



The Ontario government is holding public consultation and information sessions on proposed changes to the Building Code that

would require fire sprinkler systems in newly constructed multiple-unit residential buildings higher than three storeys.

**"Ontario has one of the lowest rates of residential fire deaths in Canada," said Jim Watson, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. "Nonetheless, we believe we can make our buildings even safer, and we will consider the comments, ideas and concerns received through the consultations when finalizing any amendments to the Building Code."**

**"Over a ten-year period between 1997 and 2006, 103 people have died in these types of multi-unit residential building fires," said Rick Bartolucci, Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.**

A public consultation paper is available on the Building Code website of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing at [www.ontario.ca/buildingcode](http://www.ontario.ca/buildingcode). Interested parties will have until May 1, 2008 to submit comments.

Public information sessions will be held in late March and early April 2008. The locations and dates of the information sessions will soon be posted on the Building Code website and on the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, Office of the Fire Marshal website at [www.ofm.gov.on.ca](http://www.ofm.gov.on.ca)

## After-school programs



On February 5, 2008 Education Minister Kathleen Wynne announced the government will increase its investment in the Community Use of Schools program to \$66 million over the next four

years. This new funding will:

- Expand the existing program

- Provide free after-hours access to about 500 schools in communities that need it most by 2011-12

- Provide new Community Outreach Coordinators who will engage communities and local schools to improve group use and create more programs and activities.

This year, funding for lowering fees will be \$33 million - a 65 per cent increase over last year.

## Wild turkey management plan

The government is currently seeking public comment on proposed changes to a wild turkey management plan and the expansion of wild turkey hunting opportunities.

For the first time, a fall hunt is proposed in several areas of the province. An open spring turkey season is also proposed in three new areas of central Ontario.

Wild turkey populations in Ontario have rebounded and are healthy some 25 years

after being reintroduced in the province. In 1984, Ontario undertook efforts to bring back populations of this bird. The estimated provincial population of turkeys was greater than 70,000 birds in 2007.

The proposed changes to wild turkey management are available on the Environmental Bill of Rights Registry at [www.ebr.gov.on.ca](http://www.ebr.gov.on.ca), Registry Numbers 010-2424 and 010-2429.

## Drinking and driving



A new law that took effect on February 20, means that those who repeatedly drink and drive risk losing their cars permanently.

The new law allows the civil courts to impound and forfeit a vehicle, if the court finds:

- That the vehicle was involved in, or is likely to be involved in, a drinking and driving offence, AND

- The vehicle is owned or driven by a person whose driver's licence has been suspended for a drinking and driving offence two or more times in the preceding 10 years.

Victims of the activity which resulted in the forfeiture may apply for compensation from the proceeds of sale.

**"Repeat drinking drivers who aren't getting the message now run the risk of having the courts take their vehicles away forever said Attorney General Chris Bentley.**

## Safe schools



On February 1, 2008 changes took effect that will make Ontario schools safer by more effectively combining discipline with opportunities for stu-

dents to keep learning.

School boards are now required to:

- Provide programs to students who have been expelled or are on a long-term suspension to allow them to continue their education and access services such as anger management or career counselling
- Treat bullying as an infraction for which suspension must be considered
- Consider mitigating and other factors before students are suspended or expelled
- Respond to all inappropriate behaviours in the most appropriate way instead of automatic suspensions and expulsions (in most cases). This could include a range of consequences such as meetings with parents,

referral to a community agency, suspension or expulsion.

School boards are being encouraged to work more closely with local community agencies. These could include mental health providers and child and family services. The province will provide \$9 million over the next three years to help boards work with community partners to provide at-risk students with access to these additional supports.

**"A safe learning environment is essential for students to succeed," said Education Minister Kathleen Wynne. "I am confident that we will continue to make our schools safer by building on the investments and changes we have already put in place."**

These requirements complement an investment of more than \$43.7 million for training, programs and supports to address inappropriate behaviour, and fund additional personnel to help students and build upon work already done to improve school safety.

## Upcoming events

**February 22-24** - The PC Party of Ontario is holding their 2008 General Meeting at the London Convention Centre.

**February 28, 2008** - The Ontario Liberal party is hosting their 2008 Heritage Dinner. The dinner will take place at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre - South Building Halls F & G. The reception will start at 6:00 p.m. and the dinner will commence at 7:00 p.m. Tickets are \$800 per person or \$8,000 per table.

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

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