



# Queen's Park INSIDER

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volume 2, issue 20

Monday, March 16, 2009

*In this edition:*

## **1. RECENT NEWS**

## **2. NOTABLE QUOTES**

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*On Thursday, March 5, 2009 Ontario PC Party Leader John Tory lost in a by-election in the riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. The next day, Tory announced his resignation as PC Party Leader effective when a new interim Leader is chosen by the Caucus.*

*The PC Caucus will be choosing an interim Leader in the weeks to come with a leadership convention to take place at a later date.*

## **1. RECENT NEWS**

### **PC CONSUMER CRITIC STANDS UP AGAINST GREEN TAX WHILE MINISTER REMAINS SILENT: MACLEOD**

Harinder Takhar, Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services, rendered himself useless during Question Period on Monday, March 2, by refusing to protect consumers as a result of Dalton McGuinty's power grabbing *Green Energy Act*.

PC Consumer Services Critic Lisa MacLeod questioned the Minister why as to he would not stand up for consumers protecting Ontarians in the face of skyrocketing energy prices and massive government intrusion. Ironically, the Minister did not stand up for consumers or to answer the question.

"This is the biggest threat to consumer protection in the provinces' history," stated MacLeod. "More taxes, more government bureaucrats and more government intrusion onto real property. How can any of those be good for Ontario consumers?"

"I can't believe as Minister of Consumer Services he would allow this," added MacLeod. "This is the biggest threat to consumers in Ontario's history. Enough is enough!"

### **MCGUINTY UNPREPARED FOR RECESSION: CHUDLEIGH**

On Monday, March 2, PC Economic Development and Trade Critic Ted Chudleigh (MPP Halton) said that the GDP statistics released that day prove Ontario is in the grips of recession and that Premier McGuinty's "year of denial" has left the province unprepared.

"One year ago the Premier and the Minister of Finance were predicting balanced budgets and good times ahead," said Chudleigh. "We thought otherwise and we said so. The economic indicators were everywhere – in rising prices, unemployment stats, tightening credit, consumer confidence – it was obvious to everybody except the Ontario Liberals that we were heading towards recession."



"A wise government would have been honest from the beginning and made the tough decisions early," added Chudleigh. "A year ago we should have begun to tighten spending despite the cries from special interest groups, but instead we got more pandering. We should have introduced early budgets to create a more predictable climate for businesses, but instead we have to wait until the last possible minute."

## **GEORGE SMITHERMAN: MINISTER OF EVERYTHING: *Question Period can't become "The Smitherman Show", Shurman says***

It started last year when George Smitherman was named Minister of Dalton McGuinty's new joint Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure. On March 2, Smitherman continued the take-over of McGuinty's cabinet by becoming the Minister of Everything, after answering questions directed at the Ministers of Seniors and Consumer Affairs.

"Minister, why have you been so silent on the new energy bill when you know it hits seniors hard when they can least afford it?" PC MPP Shurman (Thornhill) asked Aileen Carroll, the Minister Responsible for Seniors.

Carroll passed off her question and her responsibility for seniors to Smitherman after the Minister of Consumer Services did the same thing minutes earlier. Smitherman, in turn, sloughed off Shurman's question.

"I asked a serious question about how hard the Liberals' expensive new energy bill will hit Ontario's already struggling seniors," said Shurman after Question Period. "I expected an answer from the Minister Responsible for Seniors. Then, when the question was passed to George Smitherman, I expected an answer from him. I received none from either."

## **EDUCATION MINISTER MUM ON SCHOOL CALENDARS**

On Monday, March 2, PC MPP Joyce Savoline asked the question that has been on the minds of parents across Ontario – will the Minister of Education approve school board calendars that return students to class before Labour Day?

"Two short years after the creation of "family day" parents are now faced with the prospect of sacrificing the last week of summer family vacation because their School Boards can't find enough teaching days to accommodate the Minister's mandated Professional Development days," stated Savoline.

The Minister responded by quoting the Ministry of Education guidelines that mandate 194 teaching days per year. However, what the Minister failed to mention is that her office has the ability to approve these calendars or send them back to the school boards with a clear directive.

## **UNIVERSITIES MUST PROTECT STUDENTS FROM INTIMIDATION**

With Israel Apartheid Week in full swing Peter Shurman, MPP (Thornhill) met with York University President Dr. Mamdouh Shoukri on March 3, to discuss the protection of freedom of speech while at all times guaranteeing student safety on campus.

"We agreed that the university has always been and should always be the centre of debate and discussion, no matter how controversial the issue. But we also agreed that strong action must be taken whenever hate laws are not respected or the university becomes the site of intimidation, humiliation or threat of violence," said Shurman.



Shurman has previously called on the Liberal Party and the NDP to follow in the footsteps of his Progressive Conservative Caucus and condemn Israel Apartheid Week en masse. To compare Israel's policies to those of apartheid states, he says, is to diminish the pain of those who suffered under true apartheid regimes, such as South Africa. To date neither the Liberal nor the NDP Caucus signaled their intent to join the PCs in condemning Israel Apartheid Week.

## **MONTHS INTO RECESSION, STILL NO LIBERAL PLAN**

Ontario PC Party Leader John Tory and Ontario PC Finance Critic Tim Hudak (Niagara West-Glanbrook) on Tuesday, March 3, slammed Dalton McGuinty for his continued inaction on Ontario's economy and news of an \$18 billion deficit.

"Dalton McGuinty was handed a \$27 billion increase in revenues from Ontario taxpayers and businesses. Instead of putting money aside for when times got tough, he frittered it all away and now we are plunging into a deep deficit," said Hudak. "It will take Ontario longer to recover as a result – it's clear Dalton McGuinty has failed the test of leadership."

"Ontario is in a crisis and the \$18 billion deficit we're facing confirms it," said Tory. "Now is the time to work together in the best interest of Ontario. We've got to create jobs and get started on the task of turning our economy around. Ontario can do better – with the right leadership."

## **WILL PESTICIDES BECOMES PART OF UNDERGROUND ECONOMY?**

As the McGuinty Liberals get set to release the final set of rules under the *Cosmetic Pesticides Act*, local MPP and PC Environment Critic Toby Barrett warns of the creation of a new underground market.

According to reports, the Ontario Government will announce sweeping regulations that will outlaw lawncare products and impact lawncare companies and retailers right across the province. Consumers may find themselves at a loss when looking for a trusted product to take care of infestations like grubs.

"This government has problems with illegal tobacco due to its high tax policies and over-regulation," Barrett said. "What do you think will happen with pesticide products? What will this government do to stop pesticide products from being brought into Ontario and sold out of the backs of trucks?"

## **SMALL BUSINESS MINISTER REMAINS SILENT ON JOB-KILLING SCHEMES: MACLEOD**

Already struggling with the current economic slowdown, the last thing small businesses need is another increase in the cost of doing business in Ontario, said PC MPP Lisa MacLeod on Wednesday, March 4.

On March 31st the McGuinty government will force small business to increase the minimum wage, yet again. Nepean-Carleton MPP Lisa MacLeod stood up in the Ontario Legislature against the job killing schemes for small town and rural family run businesses.

"Small town and rural family run businesses are being hit hardest by Dalton McGuinty's tax and power grabs," stated MacLeod. "When are you going to do something that breaks down the barriers for small business? Enough is enough!"

## **MCGUINTY'S DEBT WILL MAKE TOUGH TIMES EVEN TOUGHER: ARNOTT**

Reducing debt in good times is the best way to prepare for tough times. It's a common sense philosophy for most households, farms and businesses, but it's one that the McGuinty government has all but ignored, said Wellington-Halton Hills MPP Ted Arnott on March 4.



Mr. Arnott scolded Premier McGuinty the day before in daily Question Period. "His government couldn't wait to open the vault and spend, spend with abandon, spend with impunity, spend like there was no tomorrow," Mr. Arnott charged. "Well, tomorrow's now here."

Just after the McGuinty Liberals' election to government in fall 2003, Mr. Arnott introduced a resolution calling on the government to commit to pay down the provincial debt over a 25-year period. Every single Liberal MPP present voted against Mr. Arnott's idea that paying down the debt should be a priority.

## **MCGUINTY LIBERALS DIG ONTARIO INTO \$18B HOLE**

The McGuinty government has squandered a fortune and now its only plan to get out of economic turmoil is to spend Ontario into the deepest deficit in history, Tim Hudak, PC Finance Critic and MPP Niagara West-Glanbrook said on Wednesday, March 4, 2009.

Finance Minister Dwight Duncan announced that the McGuinty government plans to run an \$18 billion deficit over the next two years, including a record setting one-year deficit to be announced in the March 26 2009 budget. That deficit would exceed the \$12.4 billion record set by Bob Rae's New Democrats in 1992.

"For five years, Dalton McGuinty had our province on auto pilot," Hudak said. "Now, not only did Dalton McGuinty turn Ontario into a have not Province, but he took a \$27 billion windfall and turned it into an \$18 billion loss in a shocking display of fiscal incompetence."

## **BARRETT TO MCGUINTY: WHERE'S THE PLAN; WHERE'S THE ACTION ON U.S. STEEL JOBS?**

Mismanagement of the economy by the McGuinty government has forced one of the best in the steel working world to close its doors in Hamilton and Nanticoke.

U.S. Steel, a proud international corporation announced yesterday that now up to 2,000 steelworkers will be out of a job at Lake Erie Works and Hilton Works until the economy rebounds.

"As Premier of Ontario, what are you going to do about these job losses in primary industries," Haldimand-Norfolk MPP Toby Barrett asked in the Ontario Legislature this morning.

Barrett then told Mr. McGuinty to focus on the problem as yesterday's news has been a long time coming.

"In fact, you supported our motion in December 2005, where we asked you for an immediate plan for the manufacturing sector in specific communities," Barrett reminded the Premier. "You can't lose 270,000 manufacturing jobs based on steel and not have a plan for this now-gutting of primary industry. It's been nearly four years, specifically when will you announce your industrial strategy, a strategy for primary industry, specifically to deal with this devastation that was announced yesterday?"

## **MCGUINTY IGNORED CONSTRUCTIVE IDEAS: MPP ARNOTT**

The McGuinty government chose to ignore many opportunities to prepare Ontario's economy for tough times, said on Wednesday, March 4, Wellington-Halton Hills MPP Ted Arnott. In a statement in the Legislature, Mr. Arnott asked again how the government could be so irresponsible:

"In May 2005 I tabled a resolution calling for an immediate investigation into Ontario's industrial and economic competitiveness in order to develop an action plan to maintain and expand our domestic and international markets.

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"Of course, the McGuinty government chose to ignore this constructive idea as well.

"Now it's almost four years later. More than 272,000 people have lost their factory jobs. But this government still has yet to produce an effective action plan to restore Ontario as the leader in confederation.

"In Hamilton, 1,500 steelworkers will soon lose their jobs. It's devastating news for that city and the neighbouring communities, including Puslinch Township in Wellington-Halton Hills," said Arnott.

## **MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT REFUSES TO STOP NURSING CUTS**

On Thursday, March 5, Nurses from throughout Ontario gathered at Queens' Park to protest the government's nursing cuts. Nurses want the McGuinty government to take action to stop the elimination of nursing positions in our hospitals and commit to funding at least 3,000 nursing positions in their 2009 / 2010 budget.

"This government is taking nurses away from the sickest of the sick," said Elizabeth Witmer, PC Health Critic. "The McGuinty government has had five years to develop a plan to address hospital deficits and protect patients' services. The quality of patient care will continue to be reduced as hospitals across the province are forced to cut even more nursing jobs, beds and services," added Witmer.

On several occasions Mr. McGuinty has said that he would not cut nursing positions. Yet hospitals across the province are being forced to fire nurses and eliminate nursing positions in order to balance their budgets. Here are a few examples...

- Quinte Health Care will cut 45 nursing positions.
- Cambridge Memorial Hospital will eliminate 30 jobs, most of them in nursing.
- Niagara Health System will cut 50 nursing positions.

## **STERLING STIRS UP DEBATE ON DYSFUNCTIONAL CITY COUNCILS**

Carleton-Mississippi Mills MPP Norm Sterling started a heated debate among MPPs on Thursday, March 5, municipal councillors and the public about the problems plaguing the Ontario's big city council chambers.

Mr. Sterling's resolution called for a select committee to study reforming municipal governments in Ontario's largest cities. He raised this issue to attempt to address issues including the almost insurmountable job challengers have in unseating incumbents. In Ontario's four largest cities in the 2006 municipal elections, 73 of 75 incumbent councillors were re-elected and the only two challengers who defeated incumbents were former MPPs.

"Unfortunately the McGuinty Liberals refuse to see the growing problem, just like last spring when they refused to recognize the growing economic crisis," said Mr. Sterling after all four members of the Liberal Government who spoke said they would not support it because it was unnecessary.



## **MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT ABANDONS DIABETIC CHILDREN**

The McGuinty government ordered Liberal MPPs to vote against a private member's bill by MPP Gerry Martiniuk that would have safeguarded the well-being of young school children who suffer from diabetes.

The second reading of Bill 137 was voted down in the Ontario Legislature on March 5, by a vote of 26-13, with all but three Liberal members following orders to vote against offering assistance to children.

"The McGuinty government callously ordered their members to vote against their conscience." Martiniuk said. "I am saddened by the McGuinty government action to abandon our young school children with Type 1 diabetes. For the first time, children of tender years would receive assistance from school staff in the monitoring of their blood sugar levels and injections of medication in the case of a life-threatening coma."

## **MCGUINTY REFUSES RESPONSIBILITY, AVOIDS QUESTIONS: CHUDLEIGH CALLS THE PREMIER'S INACTION "COWARDLY"**

During Question Period on Monday March 9, Premier McGuinty ducked and dodged economic questions from PC Economic Development Critic Ted Chudleigh (MPP Halton) who later called the Premier's performance "cowardly."

Chudleigh urged the Premier to stop playing the blame game, to adjust his economic approach, and to take charge of the provincial economy. While he didn't give direct answers, the Premier did reveal a fundamental flaw in his governing style.

When asked to take some "ownership for the state of Ontario's economy," the Premier said: "We take full responsibility for pursuing initiatives."

"The Premier lives in a bubble," said Chudleigh, "It was very evident last year when he was the only person alive who refused to recognize the economic meltdown. Now we hear that he measures success by ignoring bad news. If that's his definition of leadership, we are in worse trouble than I thought."

## **MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT HAS NO ANSWERS FOR SMALL BUSINESS**

MPP Norm Miller questioned the McGuinty government for the third time last week on their lack of support for small business in Ontario, with no real answers provided.

"The McGuinty government continues to introduce all kinds of legislation that increases the regulatory burden on small business," said Norm Miller, "if the government supported small business they would not make it more difficult for them to thrive in Ontario, especially in these tough economic times."

Unfortunately time ran out during question period on Thursday, March 5, for MPP Norm Miller to question the Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services further. As a result, Mr. Miller rose on a point of order to state his dissatisfaction with the Minister's answer and filed a late show. This will give Mr. Miller five minutes after the end of Tuesday's proceeding to question the Minister again.

## **BUILDING CANADA PROGRAM FAILS ERIN AND CENTRE WELLINGTON**

In a statement in the Ontario Legislature on Monday, March 9, Wellington-Halton Hills MPP Ted Arnott demanded an explanation from the McGuinty government for turning down the Town of Erin and the Township of Centre Wellington in the Building Canada program:



"In the case of Centre Wellington Township, a strong application was made to help finance the Elora Wastewater Treatment Plant upgrades. Again, they were turned down without a meaningful explanation as to why.

"Mr. Speaker, in my almost 19 years in the Legislature, I have consistently stood for generous financial assistance from the provincial government to small and rural communities. Their infrastructure projects must be a high priority—especially now, in this time of extreme economic challenge.

"I call upon the Minister of Infrastructure to review the Building Canada criteria, give priority consideration in future rounds to communities shut out in the last round, and announce that he will begin to share the provincial gas tax with all municipalities, large and small—as they should, as the federal government does," said Arnott.

## **GREEN ENERGY ACT: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW**

MPP Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey), in his Queen's Park report discussed the new Green Energy Act (Bill 150) and what people need to know about it.

"As one of the longest serving Energy Ministers in Ontario's history, I have a keen interest in Bill 150. Under Progressive Conservative leadership, we set the stage in 1998 with the Energy Competition Act, for an expanded, flexible, nimble and commercial energy sector in Ontario. We broke up the monolithic Ontario Hydro, and invited entrepreneurs to invest and compete in Ontario's electricity system. It was that restructuring which set the stage for a financially secure and diverse energy mix, and allowed the current Government to even contemplate the things that they are talking about when they promote this Bill, such as jobs and green renewable energy like wind, solar, and biomass," said Jim Wilson.

"The *Green Energy Act* should really be called the "George Smitherman Master of the Universe Act". He has seized on the positive steps of our initial 1998 restructuring, and turned them completely on their head -- moving risk from the private sector onto taxpayers and ratepayers; eliminating competitive pricing; taking freedom of choice away from Ontario consumers; and leaving us all with higher electricity bills and fewer jobs.

"If I were Premier McGuinty, I would be worried by Bill 150, the Green Energy Act," concluded Wilson.

## **HUDAK CALLS ON MINISTER TO REVEAL PENSION SHORTFALLS IN NEXT BUDGET**

Tim Hudak, PC Finance Critic, called on Finance Minister Dwight Duncan on Tuesday, March 10, to reveal how much Ontario taxpayers might be on the hook for to cover shortfalls in Ontario's major pension plans.

Hudak said taxpayers and retirees alike are rightly concerned that Ontario's major pension funds have suffered significant losses, given Ontario's economic slowdown and sizeable declines in the stock market.

"I think the minister knows the problem with Caisse in Quebec was that nobody found out until \$40 billion was gone, and that's why we are asking you to table in your budget an update on Ontario's public pension plans," Hudak said.

Given that the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund was already more than \$100 million in the red as of last March, Hudak asked was the Minister plans to do to ensure that Ontario residents not only won't lose their jobs, but also their pensions.



## **PROVINCE REITERATES LAND DISPUTES ARE FEDERAL, BUT INTERVENES IN COUNTY'S OFFICIAL PLAN**

According to Ontario's Aboriginal Affairs Minister, Brad Duguid, the Caledonia land dispute is a federal issue.

On Tuesday, March 10, Haldimand-Norfolk MPP Toby Barrett questioned the validity of this sentiment by posing a question to Ontario's Minister of Municipal Affairs with respect to his intervention into Haldimand County's Official Plan.

In response to Barrett, Municipal Housing Minister Jim Watson said that there's nothing new about the Ministry having the legal and legislative right to approve official plans.

"Minister, your inability to manage the native land dispute is costing these local builders, plus the Toronto commercial developer, close to \$2.6 million. If you aren't prepared to put this property back into Haldimand's official plan, please explain to the House and please explain to these people what kind of compensation you will put in place," Barrett asked. "Will you provide compensation or will you purchase this land, as you did the Douglas Creek Estates subdivision?"

## **SMITHERMAN ADMITS "VERY, VERY BAD JUDGEMENT" IN OLG MERCEDES GIVEAWAY**

On Tuesday, March 10, during Question Period PC Economic Development Critic Ted Chudleigh (MPP Halton) pointed out that a government run contest which offers 22 foreign made Mercedes-Benz cars as prizes is a slap in the face to Ontario's troubled auto sector.

Chudleigh argued that purchasing imported cars for prizes ignores our economic troubles. Smitherman responded by admitting "very, very bad judgement" and further called the move "a bad decision." "It simply highlights the insensitivity that this government has towards the Ontario economy," said Chudleigh. "[The government] refused to acknowledge the problems in the auto sector for five whole years and now the industry is in serious jeopardy."

"It was refreshing to see a Liberal Minister admit a mistake but it doesn't excuse his actions," said Chudleigh. "I'm not saying that 22 cars are going to make or break the industry. However, it reveals the large gap that exists between the mood of the people and the 'Don't Worry, Be Happy' attitude of the Ontario Liberals."

## **MINISTER OF EDUCATION LOSES HER COOL**

On Tuesday, March 10, the Honourable Kathleen Wynne, Minister of Education, launched an unprovoked attack on Joyce Savoline, MPP for Burlington and critic for Education. In Question Period, Ms. Savoline was demanding action on mandatory reporting for student on student violence and abuse in Ontario schools.

"The Minister's response to my question was unacceptable. I am standing up for families of children who have been abused in her schools, on her watch and she is yelling at me from across the aisle – very unprofessional." stated Joyce Savoline. "A young girl, herself a victim of bullying is raising awareness, and fighting the good fight, virtually on her own. These people have not had any response or direction from the ministry or the Minister's office, despite repeated attempts to contact her begging for a plan of action to be taken for the sake of their children."



The parents who stand behind their children who are the victims of student on student violence and abuse in our schools are often forced to fight for years to protect them. For many of these students, without their parents' intervention, the abuse would have continued unchecked in their schools.

"The Minister needs to be accountable to these parents for the unsafe environment these children were forced to endure," said Savoline.

## **HILLIER STANDS FIRM: FREE TIBET**

MPP Randy Hillier again stood up for freedom, justice and democracy when he joined over 200 Tibetan-Canadians at a rally in downtown Toronto on Tuesday, March 10, to recognize the 50th Anniversary of Communist China's reign of tyranny in Tibet.

"Almost a year ago the McGuinty Government slapped together a surprise motion that sought: 'unanimous consent to move the following motion without notice and put to an immediate vote, without debate: that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, as a long-standing friend of China, express concern with the current situation in Tibet and encourage the parties to engage in meaningful dialogue'," said Hillier.

Back at Queen's Park in a statement to the Legislature, Hillier formally delivered another call to action. "Fifty years ago – Communist China used deadly force to crush Tibetan freedoms. This brutal crackdown on the Tibetan people denies rights we take for granted – rights to self-determination, freedom of speech, assembly, movement, expression, and travel."

"Today I proudly stood with those who strive for justice, democracy and freedom," Hillier concluded.

## **MPP: PROPOSED TAX INCREASES WILL KILL JOBS AND SHUT THE DOOR ON HOME OWNERSHIP**

Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees on Wednesday, March 11, called on the Premier to ensure that any changes to tax policy in the upcoming budget will protect new home buyers and jobs.

Klees referred to reports that the McGuinty government's upcoming budget will include harmonization of the federal GST and the provincial PST.

"Stephen Dupuis, the President of the GTA's Building Industry and Land Development Association is warning the government that without protection of homebuyers and the building industry, harmonization will not only make homeownership impossible for many Ontarians, it will have a devastating effect on the building industry," said Klees. "The last thing Ontario needs at a time when the economy is already in turmoil, is for the government to discourage home sales and kill off thousands of jobs."

## **THORNHILL WELL REPRESENTED IN THE LEGISLATIVE PAGE PROGRAM**

Thornhill M.P.P. Peter Shurman on Wednesday, March 11, congratulated Tariq Haji for his service as a Legislative Page in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. Tariq's term ends on Thursday, March 12, 2009.

Last week Shurman sat down for lunch with Tariq to discuss how his time at Queen's Park has been.

"Tariq is a brilliant young man and it is great to know that we have young people like him who are the future of this province," said Shurman. "The Page program has been around for many years and it continues to encourage youth to do well both in the classroom and in extracurricular activities."



## **MILLER CONTINUES TO SEEK ANSWERS FROM THE MINISTER OF SMALL BUSINESS AND CONSUMER SERVICES**

Unsatisfied with the answer given by the Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services during last Thursday's question period, Norm Miller MPP for Parry Sound-Muskoka filed for a late show to re-question the Minister. During the late show Mr. Miller asked the Minister, as the PC Critic for small business, to stand up for small business in this province.

Miller's frustration has grown from the continuous introduction of legislation by the McGuinty government that places more rules and regulations on small businesses. The most recent attempt by the government to stifle small business has been with Bill 139, the Employment Standards Amendment Act (Temporary Help Agencies), 2009.

"I am hoping the Minister will talk to his colleagues in labour and finance and push for them to either wait till the economic climate is better or devise a better phase-in plan for these pieces of legislation, so that they don't jeopardize the livelihood of these businesses," concluded Miller.

## **ARNOTT OFFERS IDEAS TO GET ECONOMY MOVING AGAIN**

In a statement on Wednesday, March 11, in the Legislature, Mr. Arnott presented a number of ideas to the McGuinty government for its upcoming provincial budget:

"When it comes to the state of Ontario's economy, the provincial government must focus on three big priorities: economic development, job training and infrastructure investment to strengthen our long-term competitiveness. Here are just a few additional suggestions as to what this government should—and must—do in its upcoming budget:

"They must outline a credible plan to eliminate their deficit and balance the provincial books.

"They must thoroughly evaluate the idea of harmonizing the GST and PST and hold public hearings—before making a final decision.

"They must make the Ministry of Economic Development the lead ministry of government until the economy begins to grow again. They must promote Ontario actively and aggressively, with the help of the best and brightest of Ontario's public servants," said Arnott.

## **SENIORS ASK FOR MCGUINTYS HELP**

PC Health Critic, Elizabeth Witmer, on Thursday, March 12, urged the McGuinty government to make seniors a priority, by providing more direct care for nursing home residents. Nursing home residents, their families and staff are asking the McGuinty government to use the 2009 Budget to correct the 6 year erosion in funding for services that support resident care, comfort and safety.

"Six years of Liberal inaction has seriously restricted Ontario's ability to meet the demands of our aging population," said Witmer. "More than 25,000 people are on a waiting list for a long-term care bed. I believe our seniors deserve to live with dignity and respect."

While residents in Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba and New Brunswick have more than 3 hours of personal care per day, Ontario residents do not even receive 3 worked hours of personal care, per day.



Follow this link to view Witmer calling on the McGuinty Liberals to make seniors a priority and boost nursing home care: [http://www.ontariopc.com/?sc\\_itemid=%7b15D53942-CA42-425E-BCF8-7230C6C47A20%7d](http://www.ontariopc.com/?sc_itemid=%7b15D53942-CA42-425E-BCF8-7230C6C47A20%7d)

## **GOVERNMENT MINISTER BECOMES INDIGNANT, RUDE WHEN PRESSED ON PLAN FOR US STEEL JOBS**

Haldimand-Norfolk MPP Toby Barrett clearly struck a sore spot with Economic Development Minister Michael Bryant Thursday morning when pressing him for answers on the idling of US Steel jobs in Nanticoke and Hamilton.

"Twelve-hundred steelworkers from Lake Erie Steel attended a meeting this past Monday in my riding to hear the latest on the idling of our area's largest employer, US Steel - As the Simcoe Reformer reports, these people walked out of that meeting filled with doubt, uncertainty and anger." Barrett informed the Legislature. "Acting Premier do you plan on abandoning these steel workers, just as you abandoned the 300,000 people in the manufacturing sector who lost their jobs before them?"

In responding to Barrett's questions, the Minister lashed out, deriding the Haldimand-Norfolk representative's question and hurling accusations. He stopped just short of swearing at the member.

### **2. NOTABLE QUOTES**

"Earlier this afternoon I informed Caucus that I had written to our party president to tender my resignation as leader effective following the selection of an interim leader by Caucus.

"I leave a party that has an ongoing, vibrant grassroots policy development process, which attracted more than a thousand people to a convention two weeks ago.

"I leave a party that is in much better shape financially than the essentially insolvent organization I inherited.

I leave a party that had a large number of young, dynamic first-time candidates offer themselves for election in 2007. A group who have remained active and want to run again.

Now our party will select a new leader and this will give the party a chance to unify itself for an election in 2011 when we must present a united, cohesive, sensible alternative." – *John Tory on Friday March 6, announcing his resignation as Ontario PC Party Leader.*

## **Contact Information**

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***If you have questions, comments or items you'd like to see in future issues of the Queen's Park INSIDER, please contact Jessica Georgakopoulos at 416-325-2315 or [jessica.georgakopoulos@pc.ola.org](mailto:jessica.georgakopoulos@pc.ola.org).***