

Public Services Policy Document

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
INTRODUCTION	3
OUR VISION FOR PUBLIC SERVICES	3
PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC SERVICES	3
EQUITY IN PUBLIC SERVICES	4
ANOTHER VIEW: HOSTILITY TO PUBLIC SERVICES	5
CHILD CARE	6
Early Learning and Child Care.....	6
Ontario’s Early Learning and Child Care.....	7
Lack of Political Will and Absence of Vision.....	8
Building an Ontario Early Learning and Child Care System	9
Early Learning and Care Report.....	9
ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL	11
Eliminate EQAO Standardized Testing.....	11
Fix the Education Funding Formula	11
Restore the Integrity of Democratically Elected School Boards.....	11
Colleges.....	12
Universities	12
Apprenticeship	12
Access to Education and Student Support	13
ENERGY	13
HEALTH CARE	15
Home Care.....	15
Hospitals	16
Long-Term Care.....	18
Mental Health.....	20
PUBLIC HEALTH	21
INFRASTRUCTURE	21
Public-Private Partnership (P3)	22
SOCIAL ASSISTANCE	23
SOCIAL SERVICES	26
CONCLUSION	27

PUBLIC SERVICES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Public services are the underpinning of our society. They support every aspect of our lives. Public services sustain individuals and businesses in our province.

Our Vision and Principles for Public Services

Our vision for public services evolves from a broad base:

- Workers and their unions who understand the importance of public services and are attempting to provide them in spite of challenges, such as the lack of needed resources, and the political agendas, which negatively affect the implementation of needed public services.
- Workers who serve as members and volunteers with agencies providing services in the community.
- Workers who in the past used or continue to use the services available in the community.
- Workers as citizens and taxpayers who want quality and accessible services in their community.

Our policies are rooted in the belief that there are certain principles that govern the development, implementation and refinement of public services which include:

- Universality
- Accessibility
- Comprehensiveness
- Accountability
- Prevention
- Quality Public Services for the People of Ontario
- Quality Jobs in Unionized Workplaces
- Democratization of Services
- Socialization of Services

Our principles of public services reflect the belief that all Ontarians should have access to services when and where they are needed. The principles go on to note, among other things, that consumers and workers should have a say in the implementation and delivery of services. What the principles realize is that public services must reflect not only the needs, but also the contribution of all Ontarians. This is something that has not yet been attained in our province.

This can be attained through employment equity. The OFL will continue to be an advocate for such legislation even in the midst of the economic and social carnage, we have all witnessed and experienced in recent months. We must always remember the critical importance of equity in all of our deliberations. Simply, all of our members are not treated the same in the province that we all call home.

Equity must play a role in determining how public services are part of a larger vision for Ontario. How should investments in “hard” and “soft” infrastructures benefit Ontarians and their communities as they deal with the aftermath of the economic and social carnage of recent months?

Equity must play a role in how public services are organized. For example, the Public-Private Partnerships (P3) model has not worked in the best interests of Ontarians and their communities, but has not been abandoned by the McGuinty government.

Another Vision: Hostility to Public Services

Not everyone in Ontario shares Labour’s view of public services. There have always been groups and individuals who put their own interests ahead of public interest. A goal of this philosophy is to dismantle the public sector in order to build the kind of economy that will serve their needs. A favourite tool is privatization, another is trade agreements.

Public Services for Ontarians

Our members reflect the diversity of Ontario. Public services support every aspect of their daily activities and at all stages of their lives. They need an array of public services provided by fellow union workers.

Examples of such services (by means an exhaustive list) include:

- Child Care
- Publicly-Funded Education
- Energy
- Health Care (including Home Care, Hospitals, Long-Term Care and Mental Health)
- Infrastructure (including P3s)
- Social Assistance
- Social Services

Public services support every aspect of our daily activities. An array of needed public services is provided every day in communities across Ontario to those in need by other Ontarians (who are members of the OFL through their respective unions). Public services do more than address immediate needs; they also should be seen as an investment in the future of our communities and our province.

INTRODUCTION

Public services are the underpinning of our society. They support every aspect of our lives. Public services sustain individuals and businesses in our province.

Our Vision for Public Services

Our vision for public services evolves from a broad base:

- Workers and their unions who understand the importance of public services and are attempting to provide them in spite of challenges, such as the lack of needed resources, and the political agendas which negatively impact the implementation of these needed public services.
- Workers who serve as members and volunteers with agencies providing services in the community.
- Workers who in the past used or continue to use the services available in their communities.
- Workers as citizens and taxpayers who want quality and accessible services in their community.

Principles of Public Services

We believe that there are certain key principles, which should govern the development, implementation and refinement of public services:

- **Universality**
Services should be available to all.

- **Accessibility**
Services should be available when and where they are needed and in a format that allows for the full participation of all Ontarians.
- **Comprehensiveness**
Services should evolve to meet new or evolving needs.
- **Accountability**
Government should be held accountable to consumers, potential consumers and providers of services for the continuing provision of, and access to, quality services.
- **Prevention**
The need for some services may be lessened in the future by the availability of other services today.
- **Quality Public Services for the People of Ontario**
History illustrates the point that services delivered by the public sector have served the people of Ontario well.
- **Quality Jobs in Unionized Workplaces**
Services provided by workers in a safe working environment where they and their union are treated with respect.
- **Democratization of Services**
Consumers and workers are given the opportunity to have real input into decision-making regarding the implementation and delivery of services.
- **Socialization of Services**
Services are seen as providing what the community needs and not as a means of profit-making through privatization and contracting out.

EQUITY IN PUBLIC SERVICES

Our principles of public services reflect the belief that all Ontarians should have access to services when and where they are needed. The principles go on to note, among other things, that consumers and workers should have a say in the implementation and delivery of services. What the principles realize is that public services must reflect not only the needs, but also the contribution of all Ontarians. This is something that has not yet been attained in our province.

What is needed is a commitment to employment equity. The 2007 OFL Convention policy paper on *Rights* noted that:

Employment equity is all about fairer approaches, removing barriers, communicating openly and integrating new people into different kinds of jobs. It means establishing new policies and practices to meet the demands of a diverse workforce.

What is needed is strong, positive and visible leadership by the Ontario government in talking, and more importantly listening, to the people of Ontario and having these conversations reflected in legislation. Also, educating and building support among Ontarians for this legislation.

The OFL understands the need for employment equity legislation and will continue to be an advocate even in the midst of the economic and social carnage we have all witnessed and experienced in recent months. We must always remember the critical importance of equity in all of our

deliberations. Simply, all of our members are not treated the same in the province that we all call home.

While the labour movement is advocating for employment equity, it is also engaged in a number of useful initiatives. The OFL, with the assistance from affiliates, is developing an educational tool course on negotiating employment equity. The underlying issues of employment equity may be challenged and improved by the day-to-day work of our affiliates on behalf of their members. Internally, unions are examining their own policies and procedures to ensure that they reflect the current needs and aspirations of their membership.

Another role which the labour movement can play to ensure equity in public services is to address the short comings in flawed legislation and compel the Provincial government to act in a positive manner in dealing with the situation.

In 2006, the McGuinty government introduced their changes to *Bill 107* on how the Ontario Human Rights Commission would act to protect the rights of Ontarians. The OFL joined many community organizations to oppose *Bill 107*. It was opposed by many because they saw the McGuinty government initiative as privatizing the means of protecting the human rights of Ontarians. The McGuinty government had sufficient votes at Queen's Park to pass *Bill 107* into law and impose it on the people of Ontario.

This legislation spoke of establishing the Anti-Racism Secretariat and the Disability Rights Secretariat to specifically answer these concerns. The lack of action in creating these secretariats is only one example of the short comings of this legislation.

The concerns of Ontarians are coming true. As was evident in the February 9, 2009 OFL presentation to the Standing Committee on Government Agencies which held a one-day hearing reviewing the operations of the Human Rights Tribunal established by *Bill 107*. Another organization which shared our concerns is the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Alliance which made a similar presentation that same day.

Equity must play a role in determining what are priority issues? For example, many Aboriginal communities in northern Ontario need basic services such as access to a more dependable and safe supply of drinking water. Is this fact seen as more important, as important as, or less important than the decision to expand a highway in southern Ontario?

Equity must play a role in determining how public services are part of a larger vision for Ontario. How should investments in “hard” and “soft” infrastructures benefit Ontarians and their communities as they deal with the aftermath of the economic and social carnage of recent months?

Equity must play a role in how public services are organized. For example, the P3 model has not worked in the best interests of Ontarians and their communities, but has not been abandoned by the McGuinty government.

ANOTHER VIEW: HOSTILITY TO PUBLIC SERVICES

Not everyone in Ontario shares Labour’s view of public services. There

have always been groups and individuals who put their own interests ahead of public interest; those who believe that the so-called “free market” can and should deal with and solve any issue.

They believe that public activities, as well as public sector workers are a drain on the wealth of society. They believe they generate this wealth and it is theirs to use as they see fit. They believe that decisions, whenever possible, should be made behind closed doors and that they should not be bothered by issues of process or public accountability. Simply put, their mantra is public sector bad, private sector good; regulations bad, market forces good. This philosophy has a strong and entrenched following in Ontario, across our nation and across the world. A philosophy not abandoned because of the economic and social chaos imposed on the world in the last year, but because of market forces running amok. A goal of this philosophy is to dismantle the public sector in order to build the kind of economy that will service their needs. A favourite tool is privatization which seeks to move activities and more importantly resources, from the public sector to the private sector.

Another tool is the use of trade agreements. The Brian Mulroney Conservative government (1984-1993), by signing the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), sought to impose/strengthen the grip of this philosophy on Canadians.

In November 2008 Stephen Harper, while attending the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting in Lima Peru, proclaimed that, “In a time of global economic instability free trade is more important than ever” and

went on to sign the Canada-Colombia Free Trade Agreement.

The purpose of the agreement is not to better the lives of Colombians or Canadians, but rather to protect corporate interests in both countries. In June 2009, the European Union and Canada announced the beginning of the negotiations for a Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA). The purpose of this, to quote Stockwell Day, Canadian Minister of International Trade is, “to reduce trade barriers and open doors for business.”

The media release went on that a joint scoping exercise showed that both sides would benefit from, “a comprehensive agreement covering trade in goods and services, investment, public procurement, the protection and enforcement of intellectual property rights, and commitments on the social and environmental aspects of trade and sustainable development.”

Such agreements are not limited to the international level. In 2006, British Columbia and Alberta signed the Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement (TILMA). It came into effect April 1, 2007. Article 3 entitled, “No Obstacles” that reads, “Each Party shall ensure that its measures do not operate to impair or restrict trade between or through the territory of the Parties, or investment or labour mobility between the Parties.” Critics of TILMA, including the labour movements in both provinces, see this as a vehicle to attack and dismantle existing public services.

In November 2007, Ontario and Quebec signed an agreement to start talks to remove interprovincial trade barriers. In the words of the *Toronto Star* (November 26, 2007), “negotiators will look at harmonizing regulations that govern

everything from the weight of trucks to health-care professions to find ways of making it easier for companies to operate in both Quebec and Ontario...”

In May 2009, the McGuinty government introduced the *Ontario Labour Mobility Act, 2009* (Bill 175). This proposed legislation raises the concern of implementing lesser certification requirements in regulated occupations for out of province workers than for Ontario trained workers.

In plain language, an important goal of these agreements is to gain access to public assets and public services in order to use these resources to generate profits for a small number of individuals and corporations at the expense of the wider population in these jurisdictions. Another goal is to ensure that public sector activity is curtailed so not to compete with the private sector.

The challenge to our public services is very real. It must be understood, challenged and defeated. A first step is to ensure that Ontarians have an understanding of the importance of public services in their lives and in the lives of their communities.

CHILD CARE

Early Learning and Child Care

For three decades the OFL and the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care have organized and mobilized for the creation of a system for child care that is universally-accessible, high-quality, not-for-profit, regulated and publicly-funded.

A system that would meet the needs of children and parents to provide decent wages and working conditions for workers in this sector. For 30 years, studies have shown the benefits of such a comprehensive early learning and child care system.

The benefits of a well-funded, high-quality, affordable and universally-accessible system of early learning and child care will be felt across sectors and in all communities by:

- Contributing to the equality of women, who are often the primary caregivers for their children and who also make up ninety-seven percent of the child care workforce.
- Enhancing early learning for children as an essential first stage in a system of lifelong learning that promotes and equalizes opportunities for all children regardless of family income and social background/circumstances.
- Reducing the poverty rate because child care access improves women's participation in the workforce, which brings child poverty rates down. It also improves lifetime earnings which reduces poverty rates in old age.

In this time of economic upheaval, child care, like no other public investment, is critical in times of serious economic uncertainty. Child care is good for the economy – whether a good or bad economy. Child care gives families the ability to weather the storm of keeping jobs, looking for work, attending community colleges and universities and participating in retraining.

Ontario's Early Learning and Child Care

There is no coherent child care system in Ontario. Decades of ad-hoc, piecemeal government policies, a market-driven approach based on parents' ability to pay, declining provincial child care budgets and downloading onto cash-strapped municipalities have caused a serious child care crisis for families with young children. A situation which has led to:

- Long established child care centres, including community college lab schools, being forced to close. Existing child care centres reporting difficulties in attracting and retraining qualified staff, since wages are low and benefits and working conditions are poor. According to a recent Statistics Canada release (2008), Ontario's early learning and child care workers are among the worst paid in Canada.
- Parents are having a tough time affording quality child care – if they can find spaces. Thousands of Ontario's parents are forced to resort to make-shift child care arrangements because high-quality licensed programs are simply not available.
- Less than twelve percent of children under the age of 12 in Ontario have access to high-quality, regulated child care.

The need for a child care strategy and funding to build and sustain it has never been greater. During the 2003 election, as leader of the Liberal Party, Dalton McGuinty promised to invest \$300 million for early learning and child care as part of his party's Best Start Plan.

Today, despite an escalating crisis in the child care system and repeated calls for that promise to be kept, the Provincial government has failed to meet its commitments.

The Liberal Best Start Plan does not:

- produce a seamless service
- commit to a universal-system of early learning and care
- address early learning and care needs of children ages 0-3 and ages 6-12
- protect against expansion in the commercial child care sector
- address the role of the informal sector in child care in Ontario
- address the most essential ingredients of quality: the staff; commit new provincial funding to child care; plan for adequate and meaningful consultation with all members of Ontario's child care community and contain an adequate timetable and targets

In the 2007 Budget, the McGuinty Liberal government committed to \$25 million funding in the following two years. Child care was not even mentioned in the 2008 or 2009 budgets. This \$50 million total commitment for 2007 falls \$275 million short of the funding promised in 2003.

Lack of Political Will and Absence of Vision

Why is this happening? The current Provincial government has continually blamed its own lack of action and political will on the cancellation of the 2005 federal/provincial child care funding agreements, despite its

own 2003 commitment of \$300 million to fund child care independent of any federal support.

Lack of action has Ontario parents continually facing long waiting lists for affordable child care spaces and scrambling to find child care. The high cost of early learning and child care means tens of thousands of children are on waiting lists for a child care subsidy.

Without capital and operating funding there will be no growth in not-for-profit early learning and child care programs in Ontario. The McGuinty government is fostering the growth of poor quality child care in Ontario by not supporting legislation to direct child care licenses to not-for-profit providers.

Ontario's families and children face yet another child care crisis. Federal funding of \$63.5 million expires in March 2010. Without a commitment of provincial funds, municipalities – who deliver early learning and child care programs in local communities - will be forced to cut thousands of child care subsidies and cut as many as 4,000 child care jobs.

The OFL and Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care launched a province-wide campaign to pressure the McGuinty government to address the crisis. The government's response to this crisis was to add another patch of bridge funding of \$18 million to save 8,500 daycare spaces open to June 2010.

The bridge funding is welcomed, but the problem has not been solved. The provincial funding is only a reprieve, not a long term solution. It just maintains the existing number of affordable child care spaces. What is needed is a dramatic expansion.

The bigger issue is building an Ontario system of early learning and child care that is universally-accessible, high quality, not-for-profit, regulated and publicly-funded that would meet the needs of children and parents to provide decent wages and working conditions for workers in the sector.

The McGuinty Liberal government's response is not about vision or political will. His answer remains disappointingly the same: "We continue to call on the Federal government to restore funding for child care in Ontario."

The Harper government has been very clear in its disdain of child care and the transformative effect it can have on families. There is nothing to suggest Harper has changed his mind.

Our neighbouring provinces have not waited for Ottawa. Ontario parents pay \$40 - \$65 a day for child care; Quebec charges just \$7 a day for child care; and Manitoba \$18.80 per day. Both provinces have invested in child care when the federal child care funding was cut back.

Building an Ontario Early Learning and Child Care System

Quebec is building a universal child care system which ensures high quality care, expansion of child care spaces, stable funding, significant increase in salaries of child care staff and affordable access to child care. In Quebec, parents pay a maximum of \$7 a day with the Provincial government paying the balance. This model, applied in Ontario, would ensure that care is affordable and accessible to all families.

By ensuring affordability, it would mean that families are not paying up to twenty percent of their income for child care. In particular, it would ease the financial burden of child care for young families with low and modest incomes, especially single-parent families and women. There is no economic reason that Ontario cannot do the same as Quebec.

The Ontario government must build a non-profit system of early learning and child care that would meet the needs of children, parents, workers and their communities by:

- Placing a cap on parent fees to make child care affordable.
- Directly funding child care centres to provide stable funding.
- Significantly increasing the salaries of child care staff to ensure educated and committed staff can continue working in child care. Including funding for pay equity adjustments.
- Committing to long-term funding for more child care spaces;
- Preventing corporate takeover of child care.

Early Learning and Care Report

On June 25, 2009, the long awaited report by Ontario's Early Learning Advisor, Charles Pascal, was released setting a new vision of delivery of early learning and child care in Ontario. The "With Our Best Future in Mind" report provides a vision of coordinated services for families, high quality early learning for children and a model of public accountability through a new Early Years Division of the Ministry of Education.

There are many positive recommendations in the report, including enhanced early learning training for staff, affordable parent fees for extended day programming and increased integration of early learning and child care programs for younger children through Best Start Child and Family Centres.

The “With Our Best Future in Mind” report is a very important move towards universal and publicly-funded early learning programs for all children in Ontario. Many of the report’s recommendations are in line with what advocates have called for over two decades – a public, not-for-profit system of early learning and child care. However visionary the report, its recommendations will remain an interesting theory without government action on policy, funding and legislation.

In response to the report, Premier McGuinty has committed \$200 million in 2010 and \$300 million in 2011. This money will be used to establish pilot programs in low-income areas. The government’s quick response was welcomed. However, questions on province-wide implementation are raised with McGuinty already warning that the recession may delay or prevent full implementation of the report.

The Pascal Report’s recommendations, if implemented, will build a foundation for an early learning and child care system in Ontario. We must also ensure that as Ontario moves towards a new system, we do not jeopardize the already fragile funding systems for community-based child care as four and five year olds move into all-day learning. The Provincial government must ensure:

- that adequate funding is provided to guarantee the stability of community-based child care programs;
- that experienced child care workers have government funded retraining programs to attain any required certifications to work within a new system; and
- that pending the implementation of Best Start Child and Family Centres, the Ministry of Education issue a directive to school boards that protects existing child care centres in schools ensuring none are forced to move or close.

On October 26, 2009 Premier McGuinty made his long awaited announcement on the implementation of full day early and care for four and five year old children in Ontario’s schools. This is a welcomed measure as this program represents a truly important building block in creating a child care system in Ontario.

It is important to remember that this announcement only represents one building block. By focusing solely on four and five year olds – and only during the school year – the government’s plan also creates uncertainties in our already unstable and underfunded child care sector.

This government must now commit to fully implementing the rest of the recommendations in the Pascal Report. That means expanding programs to include all children in the 0-12 age range, and further investment to fully support transforming schools into vibrant hubs of their communities.

The government must move to ensure funding for community-based child care programs, fund retraining programs for child care workers and increase salary of workers in this sector.

There is much work to be done to build a system of early learning and child care that meets the needs of Ontario's children, parents and workers in this sector. The vision of the Pascal Report is a strong foundation. The Federation, with our affiliated unions and community partners, will work together to ensure that the implementation of this report will strengthen our system of early learning and child care.

**ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY
SCHOOL**

Although the Ontario Liberal Party has been in office for nearly six years, Ontario's public schools are still feeling the effects of the Mike Harris Conservatives (1995-2003).

Eliminate EQAO Standardized Testing

In 1996, the Mike Harris government established the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO). Ostensibly to give parents a sense of how their children were fairing at school, and ensure that the school system addressed their needs. The EQAO tests have been largely opposed by teachers, workers and parents. Teachers' federations recognize that teachers themselves know how well a child is performing and standardized testing is a poor measure of student achievement. The Education Quality and Accountability Office has an annual budget of approximately \$32 million. Money spent on testing

children that could be better used in the classroom.

Fix the Education Funding Formula

In 1998, the Harris government introduced Bill 160, the *Education Quality Improvement Act*. This legislation removed the right of local school boards to raise funds through local taxation and was replaced with a provincial funding formula to allocate resources to school boards. Despite some modifications to the formula, the model is still flawed and ties school boards to policies and goals established at Queen's Park, not to the needs and challenges of individual schools. Consequently, fixing the funding formula remains an issue for the public school system.

Restore the Integrity of Democratically Elected School Boards

Under the previous Conservative government, school boards were stripped of many of their traditional rights. Their ability to raise local taxes was eliminated, and School Board Trustee remuneration was decimated. This has made it difficult for elected trustees to devote their full attention to their rights and responsibilities as school board trustees.

At the time this policy paper was written, the Ontario government had introduced Bill 177, *An Act to amend the Education Act* with respect to student achievement, school board governance and certain other matters. It appears to entrench standardized test results as determining factors in trustees' allocation of resources. The Ontario Federation of Labour supports the restoration of school boards rights to raise local taxes and to increase the remuneration or compensation of trustees to allow them adequate time to

devote to their broad and important responsibilities.

Colleges

Increase Funding

Although funding has increased under Liberal Premier Dalton McGuinty, the public college system continues to rely on part-time staff and faculty to make ends meet. In June 2007, the Supreme Court ruled that collective bargaining rights were protected under Canada's Charter of Rights. In response, the Ontario Public Services Employees' Union launched an organizing drive, forming first an association and then filing for certification.

Improve Accountability

Although colleges continue to operate in a climate of underfunding, underfunding is not the only problem. There is little accountability in how the colleges themselves administer funds. The majority of College Boards of Governors are comprised largely of appointees with links to the private sector.

The practice of appointing labour representatives is waning and labour will have to renew its fight for representation on college governing boards.

Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities policy prohibits the collection of ancillary fees to fund capital projects or core academic operations which are already covered by tuition fees or government grants. However, despite clear restrictions, the Government of Ontario has allowed colleges to collect prohibited fees for items or services such as information technology, labs, libraries and capital upgrades to become a universal practice.

Universities

Chronic underfunding continues to manifest itself in the university sector with understaffed and under resourced institutions. The current financial crisis has meant significant losses to university endowment funds. Also, the decade-long practice of taking premium holidays in lieu of funding pension plans has meant that a number of universities are sharpening their blades in preparation for current and anticipated collective bargaining.

The University of Toronto made headlines with its decision to impose a flat fee, charging students the price of five courses — even if they are only taking three courses. The McGuinty government has allowed tuition fees to rise faster than Mike Harris did in his last term of office.

Apprenticeship

In May 2009, the Ontario government tabled Bill 183 – An Act to revise and modernize the law related to apprenticeship training and trades qualifications and to establish the Ontario College of Trades. This 58 page Bill overhauls many aspects of apprenticeship training.

The tabling of Bill 183 follows on a series of initiatives undertaken by the government over the past two years. Tim Armstrong was appointed to conduct a review of compulsory trades. At the time, this was a welcome step since a variety of applications for compulsory status had been made over the years and the Ministry failed to make decisions.

The recommendations of the Armstrong Review were to develop a clear, transparent and effective model of governance for the trades that were informed by those who work in or are otherwise knowledgeable about trades. Given the stagnation within existing structures, such recommendations were welcomed, as was the recommendations to eliminate two of the contradictory pieces of legislation that governed trades and apprenticeship training in the province. To implement the Armstrong recommendations, the Ministry appointed Kevin Whitaker. Whitaker published his report in April and the follow-up legislation was tabled in May.

While there are a number of positive measures contained in Bill 183, there are also other measures included that are of serious concern. It appears as though the new legislation will not address the ongoing fragmentation and dilution of trades that was put in motion by Mike Harris, but maintained through the existence of the *Apprenticeship Certification Act*.

Access to Education and Student Support

Despite winning a two-year tuition fee freeze between 2005-2007, the Ontario Liberal government has allowed tuition fees to steadily rise, well beyond the rate of inflation. Tuition fees are now even applied to the in-class portion of apprenticeship training. Forcing students and their families to increase loan debt to pay for education is not a solution to the chronic underfunding of post-secondary education. Operating grants should be increased to colleges and universities and tuition fees should be reduced and eliminated. Students who need financial support should have access to non-repayable student assistance (grants), not loans. While

student loans exist, if repayment difficulties negatively affect a students' credit rating, then complete repayment should have a positive effect. Unfortunately this is not the case at present. Finally, any government practice that results in the clawing-back of grants or other student financial assistance should end.

ENERGY

Affordable and reliable electricity was what allowed Ontario to become the economic engine for Canada. One hundred years ago, it was recognized that the generation and distribution of electricity should be publicly-owned and operated. It should not be allowed to be the sport and prey of capitalism. Public power won out over private for-profit interests and Ontario saw an industrial sector develop which provided hundreds of thousands of jobs and incredible wealth for many.

In the mid 1990's, a Conservative government began to deregulate and privatize the energy sector. Ontario Hydro was fragmented as the Conservative government prepared to sell off public assets. Costs for electricity went up, industrial operations closed, jobs are lost, poverty increased, but incredible wealth is created for a few profiteers.

A few years later a Liberal government was in power, they chose not to sell off any more assets, but most new energy projects were private for-profit ventures and more of Ontario's energy sector becomes the sport and prey of capitalism. The Liberal government also placed a prohibition against Ontario Power Generation from investing in

renewable energy projects except for hydro generation. Virtually, all new electricity generation using renewable sources were in private hands. A vital public service was being dismantled.

The demand for energy grows with the population and industrial establishments consume huge amounts of electricity. There are two ways of dealing with the demand; increase generation and distribution capacity or reduce consumption demands. A privatized system needs increasing consumption to satisfy the demand for ever-increasing profits. The private sector law of supply and demand sees increasing demands resulting in increasing prices and increasing profits. A public system run for the public interest, which does not rely on profits is better able to invest in energy conservation initiatives. Some possible solutions include:

- Appliance give-backs for high efficiency products.
- Tankless water heaters for hot water tanks.
- Regulate “instant on” electrical appliances for improved electricity efficiency.
- Provincial incentives for using Deep Lake Cooling technologies in Ontario cities.

Giving away new highly energy efficient large appliances for old appliances is cheaper than building new generation. When combined with an Ontario procurement requirement, it can also work towards rebuilding Ontario’s manufacturing base.

Ultimately, the problems created by the Conservative privatization policies, many of which have continued under the Liberal government, need to be reversed. Ontario needs a regulated energy system designed and operated with sustainability in mind and in the public interest, not the for-profit interests. Solutions could include:

- Return generation and transmission to one Crown Corporation – mandated to provide energy services, managing supply and demand, not just generating and transmitting electricity, but correct the public accountability problems that previously existed.
- Return public control over local utilities and provide low interest loans backed by the Provincial government for local electricity generation projects including wind, solar and the capture and burning of biogas in sewage treatment plants to generate power.
- Publicly-owned, publicly-run power generation, transmission and distribution. Exceptions could include co-generation projects such as industrial operations where waste heat is captured and used to generate power, agricultural operations using biomass or biogas to generate power, etc.
- Nationalizing all private renewable energy generation projects in Ontario.
- Removing the prohibition against Ontario Power Generation from investing in renewable energy projects (current exception is for hydro generation).
- Full cost accounting where the cost of environmental damage,

rehabilitation and resource depletion is calculated in the total cost of both new and present energy generation sites.

- Ontario procurement requirements in the purchase of equipment and materials.

The Precautionary Principle needs to become integrated in the primary decision-making process dealing with energy generation and distribution proposals that could impact human or environmental health. For instance, there is evidence that the low frequency noise from wind turbines has a health impact on some people when the turbines are installed close to residences. Using the precautionary principle in deciding the sites for turbines would suggest they need to be kept at a greater distance from residences until the science can catch up or changes in technology reduces the sound/vibration that is causing the problems.

<p>HEALTH CARE</p>

As Ontarians, we need health care throughout our lives. Since our founding convention in 1957, the Ontario Federation of Labour has consistently advocated our vision of a universally-accessible more comprehensive health care system for all Ontarians. Every improvement has been won only after a long struggle by the labour movement and other concerned Ontarians. These struggles have often seen the Provincial government of the day acting in opposition to the wishes of Ontarians.

In 2003 to the present, the Liberal government, led by Dalton McGuinty, has had little apparent difficulty in supporting and accepting key Conservative health care policies implemented during their stay in office in 1995 to 2003 – policies which the Liberals spoke against while in opposition. Such key Conservative/ Liberal policies are:

- Maintaining the P3 model of privatization.
- Privatizing health services by restructuring hospitals in the name of “accountability” or “efficiencies.”
- Maintaining the competitive bidding model in home care.
- No regulated staffing standard in the long-term care sector.

Home Care

In 1996, the Conservative government of Mike Harris first imposed competitive bidding in the home care sector. This was done for ideological reasons in order to increase the presence of for-profit operators in the home care sector. After 2003, the Liberal government continued this policy with two freezes, but they announced their plans to resume competitive bidding in the fall of 2009.

Competitive bidding has been a failure for the home care sector. It has not worked in the best interests of patients who need services, workers who provide the services, or for the not-for-profit agencies who deliver the services in the community. Resources are diverted into high administrative costs rather than patient care.

The McGuinty government accepted the recommendations from Elinor Caplan’s

2005 report, *Realizing the Potential of Home Care: Competing for Excellence by Rewarding Results*, which addressed, among other issues, the need to stabilize the workforce. The McGuinty government accepted the recommendations, but has not acted to implement them.

The consequence of this inaction is that the fundamental issue of working conditions has not been addressed resulting in many dedicated workers leaving the field in frustration. Working conditions, especially the issue of travel time was central to the rotating one-day job action undertaken by members of SEIU Local 1 employed by Red Cross in over twenty communities across Ontario in the spring of 2009. This action exposed the activities of the Community Care Access Centres (CCAC), which tried to undermine the job action by suggesting to clients that because of the one-day action, they could move to another provider, an action designed to move work to a non-unionized provider. The SEIU Local 1 experience illustrates the need and importance of successor rights for workers in the home care sector.

The existing Conservative/Liberal policies should be abandoned and replaced immediately by:

- A stop to the competitive bidding process in home care. A process which has created massive and regular disruption of job security and working conditions for workers and in the continuity of services for Ontarians in need.
- A move to establish a public system of home care drawing on the successful working models found in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. In such a public system, a continuum of care is provided on a universal

and equitable basis, without the presumption of unpaid care giving by family and based on enforceable standards.

- A system that ensures that services reflect the diversity of our province are accessible to Ontarians where and when they are needed.
- Successor rights for workers in the home care sector.

Hospitals

For most Ontarians their local hospital is the centrepiece of the health care system. The local hospital is “their” hospital where they go and get help in their time of need.

The McGuinty government seems to learn nothing from history. Restructuring in the name of increasing efficiencies was imposed on Ontario hospitals by the Mike Harris Conservative government in 1995-2002. The Ontario Provincial Auditor’s 1999 and 2001 Reports indicate the total costs and impact of this restructuring.

Under the McGuinty government legislation in 2004, *The Commitment to the Future of Medicare*, hospitals are expected to provide certain services, but they are also expected to balance their budgets.

That same year the Liberal Cabinet approved a plan to implement fourteen “Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs). According to the government, the LHINs model is to plan, coordinate and fund the delivery of health services in a particular region.

The LHINs structure is a split between the purchaser and the provider of services. *The Local Health Systems Integration Act, 2006*, gives powers to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and to the LHINs to find

integration opportunities. Previously where hospitals and agencies would determine the nature of services they would provide, now the LHINs determine what and the nature of services that can be provided. Hospitals cannot have deficits, therefore LHINs force them to restructure and cutback.

There is an increase in administrative costs in the LHINs, but little health care policy planning on a basis of better patient health outcomes rather than cost cutting. There is a misalignment of infrastructure, service planning and new capital costs. Population needs to play no role in the plans to cutback services. Increased costs are downloaded onto municipalities. Ontarians who are designated as alternative level of care patients are pushed out of hospitals without appropriate care available in their communities. In Windsor for example, such patients have been transferred from the local hospitals to retirement homes. This is a funding issue not a patient care issue.

The result of this Liberal strategy is significant hospital restructuring and job losses for health care workers across Ontario. At a time when the acuity of hospital patients is rising and skilled hospital workforce is shrinking.

The Liberal government's response is twofold:

- Their 2009 budget increase for hospital global budget is 2.1 percent which is below the level of inflation. The result of this decision is that more than seventy percent of Ontario hospitals will be pushed into deficit this fiscal year. Such a situation is not to be tolerated by their legislation *Commitment to the Future of Medicare*, so therefore the LHINs must "force" the hospital to

restructure and cutback in order to get out of this deficit.

- Opposition to their agenda is ignored as the Liberal's did when small and rural communities across southern Ontario came to voice their concerns at Queen's Park over the cuts to services at their local hospitals in the spring of 2009. If the opposition cannot be ignored then the power of the state is brought against them. Examples of this include the replacement of the CEO at a Kingston hospital who was resisting pressure to cutback on services. Another example was the move to replace democratically elected local hospital boards with appointed boards, as was the case in Midland.

Many, including the participants in the OFL's Drive to Work Caravan, which travelled across Ontario in June 2009, have witnessed the extent and depth of the economic and social carnage caused by the recent economic crisis. This crisis is putting additional strains on local hospitals as many Ontarians deal with additional stresses by turning to their local hospital for assistance. Health care workers are trying to cope and continue to deliver quality professional services to their fellow Ontarians.

Perhaps, the Liberal government should remember the words written by Justice Archie Campbell, *Spring of Fear*, the final report by the SARS Commission, which was released in January 2007 shortly before his death. In the report, he says:

The only thing that saved us from a worse disaster was the courage and sacrifice and

personal initiative of those who stepped up – the nurses, the doctors, the paramedics and all the others – sometimes at great personal risk, to get us through a crisis that never should have happened.

There must be a commitment to have more full-time positions in the health care sector rather than having health care workers often working at two or three part-time positions in different facilities. Instead, there is a lack of any plan for health care human resources or even meaningful consultation with unions in this sector. Even the simple and straightforward requests by the OFL and its affiliates to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to have the government enforce its own legislation (*The Public Hospitals Act*) and compel hospitals to have functioning Fiscal Advisory Committees (FAC) have been ignored. The FAC is a forum for health care workers to have input about their hospital.

Again, quoting Justice Campbell, he states:

Hospitals are dangerous workplaces, as dangerous as mines and factories, but without the protection that have become to be expected in mines and factories.

Health care workers are facing an increase in workplace violence because of staffing shortages and layoffs.

Both the quality and availability of health care services for Ontarians and the working environment for those Ontarians providing these services have suffered because of the Conservative/Liberal health care policies imposed on this province since 1995.

The 2007 Ontario Federation of Labour convention stated that our public health care system must have the following components:

- Fair treatment for all health care workers.
- No privatization in our health care system.
- Improvements to the capacity and resources of our public system in order to deal with such issues as low staff levels, workloads and wait times.
- Recognize and positively address the broad determinants of health.
- Improve our capacity to evolve the public system to incorporate programs and services such as home care, pharmacies, chiropractic, physiotherapy, dental and vision care programs.
- Build a health care system firmly rooted in democratic principles where the decision-making process is open and transparent and fully involves and addresses the needs of communities, patients/residents and health care workers.
- A healthy and safe work environment for all workers who provide the array of needed services for other Ontarians.

Long-Term Care

In 1998, the Conservative government of Mike Harris announced 20,000 new long-term beds over the next eight years. Two-thirds of these beds were awarded to for-profit corporations. This was part of their ideological agenda to strengthen the presence of the for-profit corporations in the sector. Two years

earlier in 1996, the same Conservative government repealed an existing staffing standard of 2.25 hours per day of nursing and personal care for residents.

Since 2003, the McGuinty Liberals have done little to challenge the for-profit presence in the sector while they have spoken of their support for a staffing standard and even promising to introduce a standard, but have never done so.

In 2007 on the verge of a provincial election, the McGuinty Liberals appointed Shirlee Sharkey to study the long-term care sector. Her May 2008 report, *People Caring for People: Impacting the Quality of Life and Care of Residents of Long-Term Care Homes* ignored the clear evidence in the literature supporting a staffing standard and did not recommend such a standard.

Labour was involved in the early stages of the implementation committee for the Sharkey Report until it became evident that there would be no new money for needed staff. Most unions involved in the process withdrew.

At the same time as the implementation committee was underway, a Ministry initiative (without labour involvement) was developing a regulatory framework for the sector. The result of this initiative in the spring of 2009 was the release of regulations in phases, rather than all at once, a technique which would not permit a review of the entire package at one time. These proposed regulations did not address the central issue in the long-term care sector, which is the lack of staffing standards.

The Ministry released these proposed regulations before the Ombudsman

released his report on the sector, which had begun work in mid 2008.

The OFL focused on the issue of diaper use in long-term care facilities to illustrate the need for more staffing. The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the Ontario Human Rights Commission were reluctant to act, as was the Ombudsman.

The labour movement will continue to be an advocate for a staffing and care minimum standard of 3.5 hours per resident per day. The need for such a staffing standard is supported and advocated for by many groups such as the Ontario Health Coalition.

There are a number of components needed to address our concerns in the long-term care sector:

- A required minimum standard of 3.5 hours per day of nursing and personal care for all residents.
- Staffing levels that reflect not only the numbers of staff, but also the appropriate classifications and qualifications of staff to ensure that residents receive the care that is appropriate to their needs.
- Soliciting ongoing input into long-term care policies by workers through their unions and from residents and their families.

Another aspect of senior care in Ontario is the retirement home sector which is largely for-profit and dominated by a small number of large corporations. The original intent of retirement homes was to provide a minimum level of support for Ontarians who can and wish to live lives that are more independent. It is a valid and useful service for many Ontarians. However, many retirement homes have mutated from their original

function and have become more and more like long-term care facilities, but not operating under the legislative and regulatory framework, which governs facilities in the long-term care sector.

The 2007 OFL Convention recommended action in this sector to include:

- A *Retirement Homes Act*, which would establish the appropriate legislative and regulatory framework for the operation of retirement homes in Ontario. This would be similar to the situation found in other kinds of residential care facilities.
- Regular inspections of retirement homes.
- Developing a clearly understood and simple process for residents and/or their families to complain about the operations of retirement homes.

The McGuinty government organized a consultation on retirement homes, but little has happened since.

Mental Health

According to the Canadian Mental Health Association twenty percent of all Canadians of all ages, cultures, education and income levels will experience a diagnosable mental illness this year, yet only one-third of those in need will get access to treatment and community supports.

The recent economic crisis added more demands on the existing system. The *Toronto Star*, May 2, 2009 reported that calls to distress centres by male callers have risen by twenty-two percent in southwestern Ontario in areas with severe losses in manufacturing jobs. Similar spikes in activity are very likely

in substance abuse cases and spousal/partner abuse.

The state of Ontario's mental health services for children and youth compelled the OFL to work with affiliates and other interested parties in the communities to develop strategies to build and sustain pressure on the Provincial government to implement appropriate policies.

Between 1983 and 2003, there were at least a dozen reports on mental health in Ontario. These reports and the election of the McGuinty government in 2003 did little to improve the situation.

The 2007 OFL Convention called for actions, which are still valid today:

- Putting a stop to further divestment and bed closures until full assessment of provincial needs is completed.
- Undertake a full assessment of needs in order to develop policies and allocate resources to offer a continuum of needed services to Ontarians. This must be done with the full involvement of both those affiliates in mental health services and users of these services in the broader community.
- Providing needed services in the not-for-profit public sector across Ontario.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Tragedies such as Walkerton (2000), the SARS outbreak (2003) and the Listeria outbreak (2008) are reminders of both the importance of public health and the shortcomings of our present system. The 2002 Walkerton Inquiry by Justice Dennis O'Connor noted that the Ontario government had increased the responsibilities of boards of health without increasing the funding required to fulfill those responsibilities. The interim report (2004) by Justice Archie Campbell on the SARS outbreak described a "grossly underfunded public health care system" with "no elasticity". Campbell's final report was released in 2007 shortly before his death. Sheila Weatherill, in her 2009 report on the Listeria outbreak, noted "This investigation has made clear that much more could have been done to prevent this from happening in the first place. Much more must be done to make sure it does not happen again."

Infectious disease control is one of the important aspects of public health. But there are many more: chronic disease prevention, water safety, rabies control, food safety, early detection of cancer, sexual health, reproductive health, substance abuse prevention, children's health, tuberculosis, vaccine preventable diseases, pre-natal and post-natal care and intervention.

Governments at the national and provincial levels have shown their lack of commitment to public health. In the case of the Mike Harris Tories, in 1997 they attempted to download the responsibility for public health funding from the province to local government. Strong political opposition forced them to reassume fifty percent of the approved costs of public health services. The level had been at seventy-

five percent. The result of their approach is Walkerton and the SARS outbreak. The Harper Tories have tried to impose a Safety Management System approach, which seeks to shift safety responsibilities onto the sector in order to cut government costs. The result of their approach is the Listeria outbreak.

Under the McGuinty Liberals public health units are experiencing cuts in staffing and mandatory program services because of underfunding and operational decisions to balance budgets. Provincial funding has been frozen in the last two years for such programs as Healthy Babies, Healthy Children. These programs are the foundation of good health in our communities, which is especially important in the context of H1N1.

The McGuinty government must show that it understands the importance of public health and that it is willing to direct sufficient resources to rebuild and maintain such a system in our province. This includes closer oversight of the functioning and operations of boards of health.

INFRASTRUCTURE

It is the view of the Ontario Federation of Labour that governments that provide publicly-owned infrastructure are providing a public service. The presence of such services as roads, public transit, water and garbage ensures a quality of life for members of the community and is an underpinning of the social and economic life in that community.

The provision of these public services provides employment opportunities for dedicated and qualified members of the

community (our members). Because the services are publicly-owned community members have a democratic say and control regarding the development and operation of these services in the community.

There must be an understanding of the importance of social and physical infrastructure for the economy and society of Ontario.

Investing in public transit systems, child care and health care would address the concerns of many Ontarians and would increase the productivity in the economy and sustain and expand local employment.

Moves towards sustainability such as a MUSH (municipalities, universities, schools and hospitals) a sector energy retrofit program that can be implemented quickly and keep skilled workers in Ontario and train new workers by giving them the skills for tomorrow.

A Buy Ontario policy which is permitted under the terms of NAFTA and WTO which give sub-national government's full power to source locally would provide opportunities for Ontario businesses to retain and expand their expertise, markets and workforces.

Public-Private Partnership (P3)

In our view, one model which has no place in Ontario is the Public-Private Partnership (P3s). This idea, first imported to Ontario by the Mike Harris Conservatives is a political shell game. The 2005 OFL Convention statement, *Public-Private Partnerships (P3s) and the Transformation of Government* analyses this model:

- Governments have the lowest cost of borrowing. Using the P3 model the government pays a private

corporation to go out and borrow on the government's behalf, at a cost which is higher than if the government borrowed the money itself.

- The P3 model shifts administrative and public policy control to a third party. It drives a wedge between public services and their delivery, creating a category of services that are still public services, but which are privately delivered. The idea of democratic control and input from the wider community is abandoned.

The P3 model has been used most extensively in the health care sector. While in opposition, the Liberals opposed the public-private partnerships policy of the Conservative government. After attaining power in 2003, they did not abandon the model; they embraced the idea, signed P3 hospital deals in Brampton and Ottawa and gave it a new name, "Alternative Financing and Procurement."

In May 2005, the Minister of Public Infrastructure, David Caplan released *ReNew Ontario 2005-2010* – the Liberal five-year privatization plan with the extensive use of the P3 model. It is not surprising that the Conservatives congratulated the Liberal government for continuing their (Conservative) agenda of privatization of the public sector by continuing the P3 program.

The McGuinty government faced spirited opposition in community after community as they tried to impose the P3 model – rather than the publicly financed and publicly operated model for hospitals. The labour movement, especially OFL affiliates in the health care sector, worked with the Ontario Health Coalition to build and sustain this community opposition to P3s.

The falsehoods of the P3 model were exposed by such actions as the series of reports released by OPSEU Local 479, which catalogued the bizarre operating procedures at the Royal Ottawa Hospital, which was the first P3 hospital to come on line in Ontario.

The P3 hospital in Brampton was the focus of a long struggle by the Ontario Health Coalition, OFL affiliates in health care and local community organizations to have the real information about this flawed deal available for all Ontarians.

The 2008 Ontario Auditor General Report on the Brampton Civic Hospital provides a wealth of credible information. Two points are sufficient to undermine the validity of the Conservative/Liberal policy of support for P3s:

That the all-in cost could well have been lower had the hospital and the related non-clinical services been procured under the traditional approach, rather than the P3 approach implemented in this case. (p.104)

The hospital was not given a choice – it was told by letter by the Conservative government in February 2002 that it must build the hospital as a P3 and no other options would be considered. (p.108)

Ontarians will continue in their opposition to any attempt by the Liberal government to impose the P3 model on the health care system of their province. The growing body of research continues to undermine the P3 model as a viable policy option. The recent example of the Peterborough Hospital is an example of addressing the health care needs of a community using the

traditional Ontario approach to financing and building a hospital.

Now is the time for the McGuinty government to abandon this failed Conservative/Liberal policy.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

The purpose of a social assistance system must be to assist Ontarians in their time of need. In fact, Ontario's social assistance system does little to reduce poverty and in fact contributes to poverty in our province.

The present social assistance system was a creation of the Conservative government of Mike Harris. *The Ontario Works Act (OWA)* was proclaimed on May 1, 1998. The purpose of this *Act* is to provide financial and employment assistance to single people, couples with and without children and sole-support parents. Sole-support parents under the repealed *Family Benefits Act* were transferred to Ontario Works (OW).

The Harris government believed that mandatory participation in Ontario Works would assist people in moving as quickly as possible to a job. Another piece of legislation the *Ontario Disability Support Program Act (ODSP)* was proclaimed on June 1, 1998. The purpose of this *Act* is to provide income support for people with disabilities and employment support for people with disabilities who are seeking to work. People with disabilities and permanently unemployable people under the former *Family Benefits Act* were transferred to ODSP.

These programs are a frustrating and complex maze of rules and regulations for both recipients and the workers charged with administering these programs. The system is based on a presumption of ineligibility. There is little opportunity for workers to support recipients; rather their role is to enforce the rules. The “move quickly to a job” philosophy has resulted in a revolving door between social assistance and the low paid labour market.

Low benefit levels result in recipients living below the poverty line in a precarious state. The occasional slight increase in rates by the Ontario government during the budget process does little to improve the lives of recipients. Many recipients feel that they are trapped in a life of poverty by a system from which there is no apparent escape.

At present, there appears to be a window of opportunity to transform the social assistance system in our province. In December 2007, the McGuinty government released *Breaking the Cycle* – their poverty reduction plan. Part of this poverty reduction plan was a promise to launch a review of social assistance. A poverty reduction plan which reflects the needs of Ontarians would help many to escape poverty.

At the same time, Ontario was experiencing the growing economic and social carnage of a severe economic crisis that was touching every part of Ontario. Ontarians who lost their jobs face the harsh reality that in many cases they did not qualify for Employment Insurance (EI). The inadequacies of the EI system have been addressed by many including the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) in their campaign (*Get Real! It's the Economy. Make it Work for Us*). If

workers qualify for EI, it is only for a limited period. Many Ontarians who do not qualify for EI or are now facing the end of their benefits will be forced to turn to Ontario's social assistance system. When they do so, they will find that to qualify they must use up their assets including any savings and RRSPs before receiving any support from the Ontario government.

Ontarians who go through this experience will demand a social assistance system that helps them to rebuild their lives and not punish them for events beyond their control.

Much can be done to improve the social assistance system in Ontario. In their February 2009, *A Blueprint for Economic Stimulus and Poverty Reduction in Ontario*, the 25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction makes the following recommendations:

- Introduce a \$100 monthly Healthy Food Supplement to begin to address serious deficiencies in the Basic Needs Allowance of all adults receiving Ontario Works or ODSP.
- Index social assistance rates, beginning in the 2010-11 budgets.
- Increase OW and ODSP asset levels to reduce asset stripping and allow those recipients to accumulate an economic cushion.
- Eliminate rules that punish sensible money management, such as sharing accommodation, choosing room and board accommodation and living with family.
- Eliminate byzantine income rules, including treatment of loans as income, deductions from rates where family/friends assist with groceries and dinners.

- Streamline the level of eligibility monitoring. For example, limit the withholding of benefits for failure to provide information to only those circumstances that involve serious issues of current eligibility; eliminate income reporting where there is no income, and reduce ongoing documentary review to a sensible level.
- Remove income penalties for dependent children who leave school and for children over 18 who stay within the family household.
- Allow recipients to continue receiving OW/ODSP income support while attending post-secondary education instead of taking out OSAP loans, and remove restrictions on singles accessing post-secondary education.
- Do not deduct gross income from other sources when recipient is actually receiving a lower net amount.
- Give local delivery agents the discretion to not pursue overpayments that result from administrative error or where collection results in hardship.
- Explicitly include in the upcoming review of Social Assistance a commitment to ensuring high quality and effective education, training and employment support programs for recipients of OW and ODSP.
- In the interim, extend eligibility for all provincially funded and/or delivered employment support and training programs to recipients of Social Assistance.
- Ensure that every annual plan required under the Canada-Ontario Labour Market Agreement explicitly includes the provision of high quality and effective education, training and employment supports to people receiving OW and ODSP.

Concerning related issues such as the Ontario Child Benefit the report recommends to:

- Increase the maximum Ontario Child Benefit payment to \$92 per child per month in the 2009 budget, with a further increase to \$125 per child per month in the 2010 budget. These increases should be available to all children regardless of the source of their parent's income.

The increase to \$92 per child per month was part of the 2009 Ontario Budget.

On the issue of a housing benefit, the report recommends to:

- Introduce a housing benefit that would be available to all low-income Ontarians. The benefit would be equal to seventy-five percent of the difference between actual rent paid and thirty percent of low-income individuals and families' income.

The Ontario Federation of Labour has played a full role in the deliberations of the 25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction.

SOCIAL SERVICES

The Ontario Federation of Labour has always believed that Ontarians need an array of quality services, which should be available in their community. Other Ontarians (our affiliate members) in the same community should provide these services. We have always believed that one of the roles of government is to develop, implement and refine services to address the needs of Ontarians. Our long-standing support for the United Way is based on the premise that services and programs receiving United Way funds provide a supplement, not a replacement to government-financed and publicly-delivered programs. In many agencies, our affiliate members deliver these programs to the wider community. While this is our ideal, the reality is less ideal.

Rather than addressing seriously the shortcomings of the existing social services system, the McGuinty government is enamored with a “transformative” agenda. Such an agenda would “increase efficiencies,” give Ontarians more “control” through “individual choices” of the programs and services they need with greater “accountability.” Like in health care, the Liberal agenda is to maintain their control over policy while lessening their direct involvement in delivery of services. Control is maintained over services through funding arrangements with agencies. This approach has been tried and found wanting in a number of jurisdictions including Britain and Australia.

In their 2007 report, *Heads Up Ontario! Current Conditions and Promising Reforms to Strengthen Ontario’s Non-profit Community Services Sector*, the

Community Social Services Campaign (a grouping of unions and agencies in the Toronto area who are concerned about this situation) referred to a “perfect storm” facing the sector. The elements of this storm are:

- An increased reliance by governments upon this sector as a deliverer of services.
- Persistent underfunding of the sector’s programs and administrative infrastructure.
- The pressing requirement for increased service and community-building initiatives to address the impact of growing inequality, poverty and discrimination.

The report called for a number of detailed recommendations:

- Creating an Accord between the Province of Ontario and the non-profit Community Service Sector – this would include all of the players (engaging organizations, unions, unorganized non-profit workers and communities) in major policy issues of shared concern.
- Reforming Provincial Funding Frameworks. There is a need for a provincial code on funding practices which would include:
 - a) Supporting administrative infrastructure. Specific mechanisms that should be examined to achieve this goal should include core funding, lead funding model and full cost recovery.

- b) Establish more responsive, stable and enabling funding mechanisms. Specific reforms that should be examined to achieve these goals include multi-year funding, Global budgeting and intentionally supporting innovation and collaboration.
 - c) Enable locally raised funds to be used for innovation and responding to unique community needs.
 - d) Index funding to cost of living.
 - e) Use fair and simplified accountability procedures.
 - f) Funding should only be provided for public, non-profit service delivery.
- Dedicated “Community Hub” funding should be promoted as an effective way of funding collaborations to establish the foundations for community service capacity.
 - Ensure fair compensation to Community Service Workers.
 - Promote more Collaborative Funding Models.
 - Set up ongoing Mechanisms for Monitoring and Reporting on the Sector.
- Introduce a one-year Community Services Partnership Program providing resources that will enable groups and organizations to maintain and where necessary, expand critical services and meet the immediate needs of community members during the economic downturn. We propose \$20 million and that these resources be allocated to community agencies in consultation with municipalities and the communities served.
 - Increase funding for community groups and organizations by \$25 million per year to strengthen the core funding of voluntary and community agencies engaged in poverty prevention and alleviation.

CONCLUSION

Public services support every aspect of our daily activities. An array of needed public services is provided every day in communities across Ontario to those in need by other Ontarians (who are members of the OFL through their respective unions). Public services do more than address immediate needs; they also should be seen as an investment in the future of our communities and our province.

The 25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction Report, *A Blueprint for Economic Stimulus* builds on this report and recommend to:

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