



Private Jail Breaks Contract, Risks Public Safety

A confidential memo obtained by NDP Justice critic Peter Kormos shows that the U.S. operators of Ontario's private prison are violating their contract with Ontario and putting public safety at risk.

"The U.S. operators of Ontario's private prison are pursuing profits instead of protecting staff and the public," Kormos said. "Instead of fulfilling their contractual obligations, they're cutting corners, risking lives and endangering public safety."

The memo shows the private prison has too few staff to protect the public properly when prisoners must leave the prison. The memo says "the present shift schedule...doesn't meet the needs of community escorts particularly when they are admitted to hospital."

The memo also shows there are too few staff to provide proper searches to keep illegal drugs and weapons out of prisoners' hands and keep correctional officers safe.

The private prison has been plagued with controversy since it opened in 2001. In August 2002, some 100 inmates armed with makeshift weapons, crude gasmasks and a battering ram rioted and tried to escape. Last August, an inmate died after a cut on his finger became seriously infected.

Before the election, Liberals promised to put a stop to American-style private prisons. "US-based prisons are out of the questions in the province of Ontario," then-Liberal Corrections critic Dave Levac said. Kormos called on the McGuinty government to keep its word and make the jail a properly staffed public jail.

"The McGuinty government knows the private prison is putting people at serious risk. They must act now to end the failed experiment in privatization," said Kormos.

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Liberal Support Plummetts - NDP On The Rise

In the latest published poll in Ontario the McGuinty Liberals have continued their slide in popularity which began after the May 18th provincial budget.

The five polls published since May have Liberal support averaging 34%, compared to an average of 49% in polls taken prior to the budget.

In the same period support for the NDP under Howard Hampton has risen from an average of 17% to an average of 23%.

In addition to implementing the unpopular health tax, the McGuinty Liberals have reneged on at least 33 of the promises they made during last year's election campaign.

New Health Money For Provinces

On September 15, Ottawa agreed to give the Ontario government some \$1.2 billion in new money for health care for each of the next six years.

NDP Leader Howard Hampton says Dalton McGuinty should use Ontario's new health cash to undo the damage of the premier's

broken promise budget that saddled citizens with an unfair, regressive health tax and serious service delistings.

"The McGuinty government has failed Medicare miserably. In just 11 months, McGuinty has brought in a regressive health tax, delisted physiotherapy, chiropractic and eye care, broken a promise to help autistic children get the medically-necessary treatment they need, signed deals for private hospitals in Ottawa and Brampton and spent \$200 million of its unfair health care tax on sewers.

In addition, Ontario hospitals say the McGuinty government is under-funding them by \$600 million and warn that will mean deep cuts to health care services in communities across the province. They warn the funding shortfall will mean cuts to chemotherapy clinics, outpatient and emergency room services and other medical services as early as this fall.

McGuinty Breaks Job Promise to Northern Communities

Communities across Northern Ontario that are losing government jobs are the

latest victims of Dalton McGuinty's broken promises, NDP Leader Howard Hampton says.

"Premier Dalton McGuinty should stop shuffling bureaucrats around Northern Ontario and start fulfilling his election promises to create good jobs and build strong communities in the North," Hampton said.

The McGuinty government has announced a restructuring of the government's shared services bureau that may result in the relocation of good jobs out of Northern Ontario communities like North Bay, Cochrane, Kenora and Sault Ste. Marie.

"Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals promised to stop the flow of good government jobs out of Northern communities. So far, all we've seen are empty announcements, bureaucratic restructurings and more broken promises," Hampton said.

The province could take real action now to promote economic growth in the North, Hampton said. Those measures include the four-laning of Highway 69 and improvements to other vital Northern roads, long overdue changes to the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund, better incentives for Northern companies to process resources in the

North and quick passage of Timmins-James Bay MPP Gilles Bisson's private member's bill that would guarantee revenue sharing for First Nations and kickstart economic development across the North.



NDP Opposes Lay-offs at Human Rights Commission

In late August the Ontario Human Rights Commission told its staff that three intake workers will lose their jobs by the end of September. Intake staff help individuals to fill out complaint forms which are the basis for filing complaints with the Commission.

The NDP says the cuts will especially affect women and people with language barriers and disabilities.

NDP Women's Issues critic Marilyn Churley says that women who need the Commission's services will find them harder to access. "We know women already have a hard time getting the help they need from the OHRC. These lay-offs will only make a bad situation worse," says Churley.

NDP Culture critic Rosario Marchese echoed the concerns of cultural groups and people with disabilities who say the cuts are completely unacceptable.

"Intake officers are important front-line workers who help people with language barriers and disabilities articulate their problems," says Marchese. "Without these valuable workers on the job, human rights violations will go undetected."

The NDP is calling on the McGuinty Liberals to address longstanding funding issues at the Ontario Human Rights Commission and ensure there are enough workers on the job to do the job properly.

"No human rights violation should go unchecked just because the McGuinty government refuses to keep enough staff on the job – but that's exactly what will happen because of these short-sighted, thoughtless lay-offs," said NDP Human Rights critic Peter Kormos.

KORMOS' KORNER



NDP Labour Critic
Peter Kormos

"I am incredibly hard pressed to refer to the incredible slaughter, poisoning and assault of our sisters and brothers in our workplaces as accidents. I've had an opportunity to examine workers' comp WSIB files. I've had an opportunity to sit down with workers who have been assaulted and maimed in our workplaces.

You see, an accident is exactly that: it's an accident. It's something which is outside of our control. An accident is referred to by many as "an act of God". But I'm not aware of a single workplace maiming, poisoning, slaughter or murder that can be attributed to an act of God – not one – that could not trace the cause back to a phenomenon that could have been controlled.

It is shameful that we continue to slaughter our sisters and brothers in our workplaces in this province in the year 2004. It is shameful that we continue to cripple our sisters and brothers, who do nothing more than try to work to put food on their table, to pay their mortgages, to feed their kids, to send their kids to college and university. Every worker in this province has a right to leave their workplace as physically and emotionally healthy as they were when they came to work that morning."

- Peter Kormos

