

# Young women needed in politics, premier says

BY ANDY COMBER

"You have much to offer...and we need you," said Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty, urging young women to consider politics as a career during his speech at the 7th Annual Women in Politics Conference held in Windsor, March 5.

"We need your passion, we need your idealism, we need you to do the impossible, and we need your hopefulness," said McGuinty, speaking of the importance of having women involved in the issues facing the province, the country and even the world.

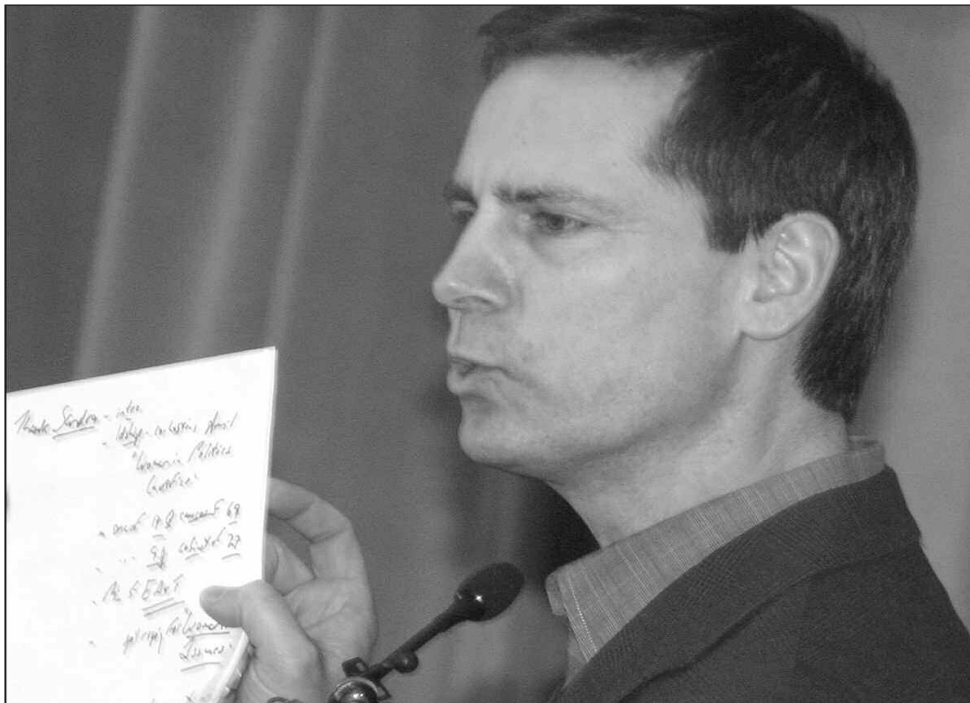
"We cannot afford to leave half the team behind," he said.

At the conference, McGuinty challenged the 250 young women attending, mostly area high school students, to "live life for every minute" and to carry on the unfinished work to fight cancer, poverty, hunger and war.

"There was a time when they said it would be impossible to fly," said McGuinty, speaking about his meeting with Canada's first female astronaut, Dr. Roberta Bondar.

"Find out what you really like and pursue it with passion. Bring that drive to excel and be the best you can possibly be," said McGuinty, "Don't let the world rob you of your ability to do the impossible."

McGuinty noted that there were nine women in the provincial cabinet, including MPP Sandra Pupatello, Minister Responsible for Women's Issues, who was also at the



OFFERING A CHALLENGE – Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty urges young women to enter politics in a speech at the 7th Annual Women in Politics Conference held at Windsor's Caboto Club, March 5.

conference. Pupatello was joined by Liberal Senator Marie Poulin, who before being called to the Senate in 1995, was a federal deputy minister and a CBC broadcast executive.

The first woman to chair the Senate Liberal Caucus, Poulin said there is a misconception that the number of women involved in politics is increasing.

"It is not a growing trend," said Poulin, noting that only about 20 per cent of Canada's elected officials are women. Women hold 21 per cent of the 308 seats in the House of Commons and about 25 per cent of the 103 seats in the Ontario legislature - a number that has not changed significantly in recent years.

Although the status of women is much improved, Poulin said "subtle discrimination" can still be found in

both industry and politics. "There are still the old boys' networks," she said.

"Now, more and more industries are getting aware, they should get gender balance," she said.

March 8, 2007, marked the 30th anniversary of International Women's Day, which was established in 1977 by the United Nations to celebrate the progress made to advance women's rights and to assess the challenges that remain. "Ending Impunity for Violence against Women and Girls" is the UN's theme for 2007.

Earlier on March 2, Pupatello announced the launch of a new provincial award called "Leading Girls, Building Communities" to recognize the contributions of young girls in communities across Ontario.

"We are launching this award today in celebration

of International Women's Day, which is a global day to inspire and celebrate the accomplishments of women and girls," said Pupatello. "Recognizing young women's contributions in Ontario is a perfect way both to celebrate this day and to empower our young women to become the leaders of tomorrow."

The award recognizes young women, aged 18 years and under, who demonstrate exceptional leadership to improve the lives of others and champion issues that lead to positive social change in their schools, communities or province.

MPPs are invited to nominate young women for the award from their ridings. The award recipients will receive a Certificate of Recognition from the Government of Ontario.

# Investments in health care urged

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

It was made more difficult for the province to fulfill their commitment this year because ambulance services were enhanced by about \$2 million for delivery of services and the requirement to meet response times, Santos said.

Gerretsen was also told there needs to be a greater emphasis on physician recruitment.

The county's ambulance services are facing significant stress in their ability to

provide for residents due to a shortage of doctors, Santos said.

"Over the past week, we've had nine ambulances stopped at (Leamington) hospital doors waiting to unload patients. The next day we had ten," Santos said. "Again, we emphasize the importance of maintaining investments in health care. The announcements and commitments (the province) has made to address teaching and sponsoring medical schools is promising but it's still not enough to deal with the

issues we have today."

Gerretsen said he recognizes the fact that services provided by the local municipalities are extremely important.

"Support has been given in the past and will continue to be given," he said.

Santos also expressed hope for a renewal of the Move Ontario Fund, a one-time \$1.2 billion investment in the province's municipal roads, bridges and public transit systems.

Gerretsen promised to take the idea back to Queen's Park and suggest

that such a program be continued this year.

"They called it one time funding, we called it a trial balloon that actually worked and floated for all municipalities," Santos said. "Essex County benefited strongly from that type of funding and we're hoping to get the same commitments or announcements in the upcoming budget. It's a program that basically put dollars into every municipal coffer and helped get a lot of important infrastructure projects completed."

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