

# Liberals defend their record on Ontario's child-care services [CA-ON] <sup>[1]</sup>

Letters and Issues, The Sudbury Star

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## AVAILABILITY

See text below.

## EXCERPTS

Re: Province needs to do more to fight child poverty - Jan. 14

I'd like to take this opportunity to clarify a few of the points made by Nickel Belt MPP France Gelinas in her article. Addressing poverty is an important priority of this government, and that's why we're developing a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy that will help all Ontarians achieve their full potential.

We're certainly not starting from scratch, we've already made important strides on this front. Our first term in government resulted in 22,000 new child-care spaces under the Best Start plan, and this includes nearly 1,000 spaces in Sudbury alone. I commend Sudbury MPP Rick Bartolucci on his advocacy for this important initiative.

We've also made consistent increases to the minimum wage and in early 2010 it will exceed what the NDP is calling for when it reaches \$10.25 per hour. In fact, in March of this year, the minimum wage is set to rise again when it goes from \$8 per hour to \$8.75 per hour.

Gelinas needs to get her facts straight. With the Ontario Child Benefit, we've not only ended the clawback of the National Child Benefit Supplement, but have gone further to provide increased support for Ontarians in the very situations that she references.

Starting in July 2008, low-income families will begin to receive up to \$50 per child every month. When fully implemented, the Ontario Child Benefit will assist more than one million children in 600,000 low-income families - or as I like to think of it, provide up to \$90 a month per child, which will buy a lot of groceries for families struggling to afford enough nutritious food for their children.

There's still more to do - and we're not taking a break. We've already committed to a dental plan for low-income Ontarians and the Premier has appointed an Early Learning Adviser to advise on a plan to implement full-day learning, which will free up thousands of day-care spots.

Moving forward, in the next year our cabinet committee on poverty reduction will decide the best way to measure poverty and will develop meaningful, but achievable, targets.

We all have a role to play in tackling this issue. I hope that the passion Gelinas expresses will compel her to do the right thing instead of voting against the progressive measures she advocates for, as her party has so often done in the past.

I know together we can work to provide the opportunities for our children to achieve their full potential and build a caring and productive society.

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-reprinted from The Sudbury Star

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