

EQUALITY DENIED

KEY ISSUES

The Ontario Human Rights Commission was a key engine to help guarantee equality in Ontario. The Conservatives slashed its budget and the Liberals have severely cut the Commission's ability to provide help because it will no longer investigate or deal with complaints. The McGuinty government has effectively privatized the system. People with human rights complaints will now need to hire lawyers to go through the Human Rights tribunals process. All this does is line the pockets of lawyers.

Under Ontario's NDP government, human rights flourished with employment equity laws for the public sector and the police, and fully funded proxy Pay Equity. The Conservatives abruptly cancelled Employment Equity laws, and refused to fund proxy Pay Equity in the broader public sector. The Liberals have not introduced affirmative action initiatives nor restored full proxy Pay Equity—they recently announced that funding, that was forced on the government by a court case, will end.

Both the Liberals and Conservatives have been no friend of newcomers to the province. Cutbacks in ESL programs, and failure to address recognition of credentials for foreign-trained workers, have fuelled poverty among newcomers and racialized groups.

Aboriginal peoples have not fared well either. The Liberals have failed to provide justice for Aboriginal land claims, or address unacceptable living conditions on reserves. While ultimately a federal responsibility, provincial politicians have a responsibility to act on behalf of residents. Boil water advisories continue to be issued in Aboriginal communities, and residents in Kashechewan, for example, have received no relief other than to be evacuated because of tainted water.

The Conservative record on Aboriginal issues is even worse. As the recent inquiry into the killing of Dudley George demonstrated, the Harris Tories approach to Aboriginal peoples and their issues led to the Ipperwash tragedy.

THE PARTIES REPORT CARD

Conservatives

- Cancelled NDP government's Employment Equity laws; refused to fund proxy Pay Equity
- Slashed Human Rights Commission budget; responsibility for Ipperwash tragedy

Liberals

- Have not restored full proxy Pay Equity since NDP brought in funding
- Curtailed access to Human Rights Commission by privatizing system; no justice for Aboriginal land claims

NDP

- Will re-establish an independent anti-racism secretariat; opposed to privatization of Human Rights Commission
- Would establish independent body to support foreign-trained professionals

CUPE ONTARIO'S POSITION ...

Our choice: Only the NDP consistently supports policies to assist equality-seeking people and foreign-trained professionals.