

ONTARIO PROVINCIAL COUNCIL GOVERNMENT VISIT – APRIL 9th, 2024

Linda Squarzolo, Colleen Martin, Wilma Vanderzwaag and Mary Capobianco

A letter of invitation was sent to Premier Ford on February 21st, 2024 requesting a meeting. After a number of emails and phone messages, a response was received requesting us to forward the letter again. We also asked to meet virtually on a future date. However, we were advised, that although the Premier appreciated hearing our views and concerns, due to the Premier's extremely demanding schedule, they were unable to accommodate our request.

In advance of the visit, each Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP) was emailed a personal invitation to the breakfast reception. A request was sent to the OPC executive and diocesan presidents to contact their local MPP personally to encourage them to attend the breakfast reception. Prior to the event, confirmations of attendance were received from 19 MPPs and 4 Executive Assistants. There were others who indicated attendance would depend on committee responsibilities that day.

Two personal meetings were scheduled with opposition critics. Briefing packages were prepared for each visit including copies of all applicable resolutions. The brief for each is attached to this report. After each of the meetings, a commitment was made to keep in touch.

Breakfast reception:

The breakfast reception was booked in February 2024 with MPP Nolan Quinn, MPP Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, as the sponsor. Working with the Parliamentary Catering Services a buffet breakfast was served in the Legislative Dining Room between 7:00 and 9:30 am.

A total of 22 people attended with representatives from all parties. This included 14 Members of Provincial Parliament, 8 Legislative Assistants and Minister Representatives.

Attendees were met by OPC provincial president, Linda

Squarzolo, at the reception where a table was set up with a guest book, CWL scarves, historical photos of the CWL and a handout explaining the work of the



League and a list of adopted resolutions. (A copy of the handout has been provided with this report).

The other executive members circulated through the dining room spending time at occupied tables to discuss topics important to CWL members. The team did its best to ensure that the League's advocacy work was carried out. Issues relating to quality health care and prioritizing funding to improve long term care were among the topics covered. Other topics discussed were the government's commitment to the widening of Highway 69, mandatory ATV training for youth, regulating and upgrading funding for personal support workers (PSWs), and coverage for diabetic supplies and catheters.

The breakfast reception was an excellent format as it offered an opportunity for an informal gathering between the Ontario Provincial CWL committee and the MPPs without a formal program or speeches. This worked very well as many of the MPPs were unable to accommodate individual appointments due to their very busy schedules. We found that engaging in conversations with the MPPs was very easy in this informal setting. For the most part, the MPPs were just as anxious to speak

with us and have their picture taken, as we were with them. We also found the handout was an excellent icebreaker and resulted in a number of brief discussions with many of the MPPs. When the list of resolutions on the handout was reviewed, many of the guests were surprised and impressed that our resolutions were on a variety of social issues.



Hon. Todd McCarthy (PC) Durham: Minister of Public & Business Service Delivery congratulated the CWL on the work the League has accomplished.

Lucille Collard (LIB) Ottawa-Vanier wanted to learn more about our stance on LGBTQ. Linda explained that we follow the position of the church but regarded each person as God's children to be loved and respected. Lucille was very satisfied with this information.



John Jordan (PC) Lanark-Frontenac- Kingston (Parliamentary Assistant to Minister of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs) MPP Jordan had just recently been shuffled from the role of Assistant Minister of Long-term Care. This resulted in some good discussion

about long-term care.



Tom Rakocevic (NDP) Humber River-Black Creek (Critic: Auto Insurance; Consumer Protection; Chair St. Com. On Public Accounts). He was interested to learn more about the League and our resolutions. He spoke about issues in his riding including the closure of a popular shrine and was keen to establish an open relationship with the CWL.



Ernie Hardeman (PC) Oxford (Chair of St. Com. Finance & Economic Affairs) also dropped by and we had the opportunity for a brief discussion on the works of the CWL.

One table discussion included:

France Gelin (NDP) Nickel Belt (Critic: Health)

Jamie West (NDP) Sudbury (Critic: Labour, Training & Skills Development)

Wayne Gates (NDP) Niagara Falls (Critic: Long Term Care, Retirement Homes & Home Care).



Linda and Mary discussed health issues of loneliness as well as catheters and diabetic supplies not being funded by government. France, the Health Critic, was very aware of how much coverage was given and the need to increase it. We also referred to previous resolutions relating to Northern Ontario including the widening of Highway 69 to four lanes as there is still 68 km left to be completed. The latest budget earmarked \$2 billion for

highways but did not specify where it would be spent. We also discussed the training for safe operation of ATVs especially since a number of child fatalities occurred last year. France's aide provided his card and offered his assistance to help us draft petitions.

Kevin Holland (PC) Thunder Bay-Atikokan (Parliamentary Assistant to Minister of Mines) MPP Holland requested a meeting with the new OPC President in the Fall 2024. He also made arrangements for our group to attend Question Period that started at 10:30 am and lasted until 12:15 pm. During this period, we were all formally introduced. Our president Linda Squarzo was welcomed and recognized several times throughout the period by MPP Kevin Holland, MPP France Gelin, MPP Jamie West, MPP Tom Rakocevic and MPP Jennie Stevens. We were all very proud to represent the Catholic Women's League.



Meeting with MPP Wayne Gates – Critic: Long Term Care, Retirement Homes and Home Care



Wilma and Mary led the discussion on the current challenges of long term care. We made MPP Gates aware of the current CWL resolutions ON.22.01 Improve Care in Long Term Care Homes and ON 19.03 Long Term Care Beds in Ontario. Concern was also expressed regarding the issues with the current Bill 7, a law enacted in 2022. The bill requires hospitals to levy fines of \$400 a day on patients who can be discharged from hospital and are refusing to go to a nursing home not of their choosing. All three opposition parties agree that the law should be repealed but for now the current government argues that this law is necessary

in order to free up hospital beds.

MPP Gates also shared that he would be putting forward a Private Members Bill on May 9th that would establish an Ontario Caregiver Support Benefits (OCSB) to provide direct financial supports from the province to unpaid caregivers in Ontario.

The committee felt that the government reception was a great success. Resolutions were presented to many MPPs and contacts were established between policy makers and the Ontario Provincial CWL.

Submitted by:

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Resolutions/Social Justice Standing Committee Chairperson.