

PC leader Tory worried Ontario 'on wrong track'

BY VICKI GILHULA

VGILHULA@NORTHERNLIFE.CA

John Tory, the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party in Ontario, was in Sudbury Friday morning as guest of the Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce.

He shared his thoughts on the McGuinty government's 2008 budget. He didn't like it. If he had said otherwise, the 60 or so people who attended a breakfast at the Idylwyld Golf and Country Club might have choked on their scrambled eggs.

Premier Dalton McGuinty is "on the wrong track" by spending to create more jobs in the public sector, and by ignoring calls to cut "job killing" business taxes and regulations, Tory said.

Almost half of the 410,000 new jobs created during the last four years were in the public sector.

"That's like adding the population of Kitchener to the public sector," he said.

According to the "sunshine list," released earlier this week, the number of Ontario public servant employees who made \$100,000 or more has risen to 42,527 in 2007 from 27,459 in 2005.

Holding up a copy of the thick list, Tory said the Liberal government should set an example of restraint by reducing the size of the public payroll.

"We need private sector jobs to pay for those in the public sector."

He said the government should reduce business taxes to create more new jobs in the private sector.

This is the first time in 30 years that Ontario's unemployment rate is higher than the national average. "People are moving out of Ontario because the opportunities are elsewhere," he said.

The PCs want the provincial government to provide tax relief for small businesses, eliminate capital taxes for all businesses, and reduce

corporate income tax.

Tory, who did not win a seat in the Fall 2007 election, is touring the province to generate grassroots support. His party recently gave him a mandate to continue as their leader despite the general consensus that his support of religious school funding cost the PCs the election.

Although Sudbury's economy is strong, there are signs of a weakening economy in the province, and that ultimately will be bad for the local economy, said Tory.

When asked about the possibility of the province returning a portion of the mining tax back to Sudbury, Tory sidestepped the issue. It would help mining communities pay for infrastructure improvements, but would not address the problem throughout the province, he said.

The PCs have suggested returning a percentage of gasoline tax to municipalities for infrastructure

improvements.

Communities need a steady reliable source of funding annually that would allow them to plan ahead, he said.

Tory was also critical of the new Family Day holiday in February, and minimum wage hikes because the McGuinty government did not consult with stakeholders such as business owners about the impact on their bottom lines.



TORY

■ See the video at www.sudbury24.ca