

"RECEPTIONS AT QUEEN'S PARK:  
MORE THAN JUST FREE FOOD"

by

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## **Introduction**

As an intern with the Ontario Legislature Internship Programme at Queen's Park in Toronto, I have had the great fortune to observe the inner workings at the Pink Palace, beginning in September 2006. I also had the exceptional experience of working for both a government and an opposition member of the legislature. As a requirement of the internship program each intern must produce an academic paper. Presumably, the insider access that the interns have, positions us well to write a paper examining a little known aspect of the Legislature. Of the many distinctive practices at Queen's Park, the receptions for Members of Provincial Parliament hosted by various organizations and stakeholder groups are perhaps the most universally enjoyed and the most widely underestimated. This paper employs a number of research methods to investigate receptions at Queen's Park such as, qualitative interviews with thirty one people (including MPPs, political staff, experts, hosts of receptions and staff of the legislature); participant observations at over thirty different receptions and events; more casual discussions with people about receptions; and surveys of a selection of legislators across Canada. Appendix A provides a detailed explanation of the methodology used and the questions that were asked of participants.

There are of course many aspects to lobbying and receptions are just one tool that groups can use to try to influence government. However, for many interest groups receptions represent the first building block in the lobbying process. Despite the prevalent view that receptions are a less than remarkable approach, this paper will demonstrate why receptions are unique and important. Because so little has been written about the role of receptions, it is necessary to begin by providing the context of lobbying at Queen's Park and by explaining the operation of receptions in detail.

## **Lobbying at Queen's Park**

The term 'lobbying' comes from the "ancient right of petition" when people would go to the British Parliament's actual lobby and request to meet with their Member of Parliament (Ball, 1). There are countless stakeholder groups that petition at Queen's Park and most do at least pass through the actual lobby. These groups are interested in the politics surrounding Queen's Park, particularly the legislation that is passed and the policies that are created. Some groups have organized with the sole purpose of pressuring the government to implement certain policies. However, most carry out some form of 'government relations' in addition to their other functions. For example, the Ontario Construction Secretariat is a union that represents the bargaining agencies of Ontario's construction industry, but it also lobbies government as part of its mandate to "promote the unionized construction industry in Ontario."

Many groups have specific objectives they approach government with, such as members of the Turkish community who opposed an anticipated Private Member's Bill that would designate a day to recognize the Armenian Genocide. This group readily comes to mind as it launched a significant email and letter writing campaign. It could be considered an issue oriented group; Malvern says these groups are "informal and are likely to be around only as long as their cause is" (26). Other groups have more long term goals, such as a simple desire to increase their profile among elected representatives. Malvern calls these groups institutionalized and says they are "long lasting and highly bureaucratic" (27). Some examples would be the Insurance Brokers of Ontario or the Social Workers of Ontario.

Of course there are those who feel interest groups have too much influence over government policy and lobbying certainly has a faulty reputation.<sup>1</sup> One participant noted these negative connotations likely exist because “you never hear about the good things lobbyists do – if they get a grant [for their client] you never hear how” (Participant 5). Others argue that only wealthy groups with “multiple sources of access to the legislative process” will actually have success in lobbying government (Thompson and Stanburg, viii). However, the argument can also be made that interest groups are the “indispensable link between the people and their governments” (Pearson-Shoyama Institute, 1).

### **Lobbying Tactics**

There are numerous tactics that all these groups can employ to advance their message. The tactics most frequently mentioned by stakeholders that were interviewed included presenting to committees, meeting with ministers and bureaucrats and sending information to MPPs by mail or email. Many participants stressed that there is no one magic lobbying method, rather multiple tactics are employed by most groups. In addition to making a presentation at a committee, groups will also usually produce a brief for members of the committee to read. Groups can hold press conferences and demonstrations, peaceful or otherwise, either at Queen’s Park or off-site to catch the attention of government. Many hosts explained that they attend fundraisers to lobby (Participant 14) and one Member noted lobbying is much stronger at fundraisers than at receptions. Lobby days are a particularly popular tactic. Groups organize meetings between their members (or people who are benefiting from the groups’ efforts) and the MPP that represents their riding. They might organize a lunch with a key Minister or party leader; they will attend question period in the afternoon to be introduced in the house; and then host a reception around 5pm. Most participants agreed that receptions that accompany a lobby day are largely effective; because the MPPs have had a chance to hear the issues during the day they can socialize with the group’s representatives at the reception.

There are a number of groups that come together to lobby the Ontario government. One pharmaceutical representative stated that natural allies in the industry often approach government together. An example of this phenomenon was the reception and book launch hosted jointly by the Canadian Gas Association, Enbridge Gas Distribution and Union Gas. Hall agrees that cooperation between groups “may be a determining element of interest group effectiveness” (x). In addition, there are associations that represent a collection of smaller groups, such as the Ontario Greenhouse Alliance (TOGA) or the Ontario Community Services Sector Coalition. These kinds of umbrella groups bring groups together that would “otherwise be politically inactive” (Judge in Rush, 16) and do government relations so their members are free get on with their business.

The tactic groups choose to use depends on their understanding of how government operates (Rush, 6). Certainly, examples of groups that do not understand the demands on a MPPs’ time run rampant at Queen’s Park. On a daily basis all 103 MPPs receive a small mountain of mail, which usually includes an annual report or two, a few association magazines, information packages and letters from stakeholders, and a letter from a constituent. It was not uncommon for both Members I worked for to receive more than one hundred emails a day and, by my unscientific estimation, roughly twenty percent or more of those emails would come from various stakeholders either inviting the Member to an event or sending information. What many

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that many stakeholders think of the work they do as advocacy rather than lobbying (Participant 12, 15, 27), often because they have to educate the government on a complicated issue.

groups do not seem to understand is that MPPs and their staff simply do not have time to read and synthesize the amount of information they receive. In addition, Members really only have time to focus on the issues that pertain to their portfolio; for example an MPP from a downtown Toronto riding is extremely unlikely to read about agricultural issues. A study of MPs in England found that mail has roughly doubled since 1980 and eighty percent of MPs complained about the amount of mail they receive (Grantham and Semour-Ure in Rush, 76). It is very probable that Ontario Members would have the same response if asked.

### **Explanation and Description of Receptions**

Receptions are one lobbying tactic that groups can use to further their goals in relation to government. An extensive literature search revealed very limited research that touched on receptions hosted by stakeholders. In fact, receptions were only explicitly listed as a lobbying tool in two sources (see Miller and Sarpkaya). Literature discussing fundraisers and lobbying more generally did prove useful. However, there is a stark contradiction between an almost totally un-researched tactic and its prevalent use in a number of legislatures across Canada, including the Capital.

Due to the lack of previous research, a thorough explanation of receptions is in order. A reception in any location denotes the gathering of people, often to celebrate a person, commemorate an event or advance an issue. When invited to a reception participants usually stated they expect to be served some refreshments and meet people. The receptions held at Queen's Park fall into a variety of categories.

The first category could be considered non-political because these events are always open to all Members and staff of the legislature. Some are hosted by the Speaker to celebrate a holiday or welcome a delegation, such as the Lights Across Canada, where a choir sings holiday music on the grand staircase in the main building. The Premier and individual Members host a number of events, often to present awards. In one instance there was an event to recognize new Canadians held in the dining room. So many outside guests attended that it was very difficult to move through the room. While invitations to these events are sent to all Members it is less likely for opposition Members to attend an event hosted by a government member and vice versa. The J.S. Woodsworth Awards reception was hosted by the leader of the third party and recognized a former NDP Member; one liberal member attended for a brief period. The Social Work Award of Merit was given out to a liberal member; no opposition members attended the ceremony. The Inter-Parliamentary and Public Relations Branch at the Legislature is responsible for organizing and hosting the events sponsored by the Speaker, which all Members are usually invited to unless, for example, it is a lunch with limited seating. The Lieutenant Governor also hosts events, usually for visiting dignitaries such as the King and Queen of Sweden. On rare occasions the Lieutenant Governor also sponsors receptions hosted by stakeholders. There are of course political and partisan events as well. These would include the annual Christmas parties or fundraisers hosted by the three political parties that are open only to their members.

However, the term 'reception' is mainly used at Queen's Park to denote gatherings hosted by stakeholder groups; that is, groups that have a vested interest in the actions of the legislature. This second category of receptions, and the one that will be the focus of this paper, could also be considered non-partisan because all Members are invited, but they are certainly political as they are focused on the political issues of the day. These receptions are hosted by stakeholders, mainly to attract MPPs. When the legislature is in session there are at least two receptions per week and up to four per night. These receptions are usually held from 5-7pm in the dining room

or rooms 228 & 230 of the main legislative building. There are also breakfasts and lunches hosted by stakeholders. Rarely these events are even held in unique places such as the front law or the basement hallway.

An attempt was made to record all receptions held at Queen's Park between September 2006 and early May 2007. As the first person that usually opened the mail in both the offices I worked in, I was able to record each reception on my own list before entering it into my Members' calendars. Despite a very concentrated effort, it proved impossible to record all the events at the legislature. This was particularly true for the events that were intended for only one party, as they are only known to the invitees. But more problematic was the sheer volume of invitations. Appendix B provides lists of stakeholder receptions, off-site receptions and more general events. Details from some invitations are included in this list as they demonstrate the intentions of the hosts.

For the political all party receptions, stakeholders will send invitations to all MPPs, often both by email and paper copy. See appendix C for a sampling of invites. One group even stopped by the office on the day of their reception to hand-deliver an invitation and encourage the Member to come. These invitations are sometimes sent from the sponsoring MPP; some actually state John Doe, MPP cordially invites you to reception X. Other times the organization itself, or lobbying firm that has been hired to organize the reception, will handle the invitations and RSVPs. Members are divided on their treatment of the RSVP; some take the request very seriously and only reply when they know they can attend. Other members never RSVP and try to attend all the receptions that are held.

The stakeholders that host these receptions usually bring members of their organization or people who benefit from their efforts. For example, OECTA brings teachers to Queen's Park for their lobby day and reception. The Arthritis Society used arthritis sufferers as their ambassadors and the Big Brothers Big Sisters brought some big and little sisters. Many times the people that attend are from across the province and represent as many of the ridings as possible.

There are receptions that are held by stakeholders "off-site," often at a nearby hotel or restaurant or in the private offices of the organization. Many stakeholders who arrange conferences for their members at major hotels in Toronto often include a reception that MPPs are invited to. One civil servant who has the opportunity to attend both types of receptions found the ones at conferences much more useful because there are often workshops that teach attendees about the political process beforehand (Participant 24).

It should be noted that off-site receptions do provide some advantages and disadvantages. Participant 5 observed that holding a reception away from Queen's Park can put both parties on neutral ground and having it at the stakeholder's offices can tip the balance of power away from the invitees. Hosts can showcase a venue this way (Participant 13). Plus it is easier to be "more demanding and vocal than in a room the government has provided" (Participant 16). However, almost all participants emphasized how difficult it is for MPPs to attend receptions off-site even if they are down the street, because Members have so many demands on their time. Certainly, MPPs are much less likely to attend off-site receptions. Perhaps a shuttle bus like the one in Ottawa would solve this problem.

Nonetheless, because they do share many of the same goals as receptions at Queen's Park and because they are usually held off site only as a necessity, off-site receptions will be included in the general category of receptions at Queen's Park. As Participant 4 stated, "Queen's Park is more than just a building – it's an identity."

## Historical Development

There was a general consensus that the number of receptions has increased in the last 25 years; some participants thought there had been an increase even since the last election. Certainly it was unusual that the first reception in September was held on the first day that the house returned. However, this tactic proved useful, as even the Premier attended. No doubt the fixed election date has also affected the number of receptions; groups now know exactly how much time they have to fit their reception in. The fact that receptions are used widely may be related to what Thompson and Stanburg say is a “Canadian preference for informal meetings” (3). When asked what has caused the increase in receptions, participants provided a number of responses. Some thought there were simply more interest groups now than in the past. People were not organized around diseases like they are today (Participant 15) and “government relations firms are much more involved in helping groups hold receptions” (Participant 17). This perspective is endorsed by Malvern who says the increased centralization of Canadian political system is responsible for the “dramatic increase in the number and impact of interest groups” (26).

The receptions themselves have also changed. A number of participants mentioned the “famous” reception held by the Ontario Chiropractors’ Association. One expert, who was first elected in 1975 said:

“That was something else, well that was a few years ago, you couldn’t do that today. Cigars, brandy, I think it was all three parties. It was a lavish event, great food. Whatever table you sat at a member of the chiropractor sat with you, obviously trying to twist your arm. It would go on for several hours; the wine flowed like water, at the end of the evening you got cognac and cigars .... All the government backbenchers and opposition members wanted to be there. It was held at the Park Plaza [hotel]... It was the number one...” (Participant 1).

Other experts explained that the atmosphere at Queen’s Park was much different in the past. A former staffer noted that the legislature was much more collegial at one time because there were so many more midnight sessions (Participant 9). Another noted that the security services were not in place: “Things were much less formal - people could walk in off the street” (Participant 7). Finally, Participant 15 stated that “MPPs are better behaved today - they are less likely to drink excessively.” He speculated that things are more civilized today because more women and groups are around. It may also be that receptions are a hold over from those days when “a typical contact” between legislators and lobbyists included drinking together at the local watering hole (Zeigler and Baer, 110).

Some participants made the argument that the increasing number of receptions can’t continue as there are so many demands on Members’ time. One Member lamented:

“These lobby days to me have become a little too much and I simply can’t meet every group. We have Question Period to prepare for, bills to prepare for, speeches, correspondence and our riding. If we get too many more [receptions] they’ll lose their value” (Participant 25).

It is probable that the hosts of receptions are not aware how many other receptions are happening at Queen’s Park. The only stakeholder that stated he attended receptions hosted by other groups did not actually host receptions himself.

## Who hosts receptions?

For many of the participants in this study the question of categorizing all the groups that host receptions at Queen's Park seemed to be complicated. This is likely because groups can often “exhibit characteristics of more than one category” (Rush, 9) and because there are many ways one could classify the various stakeholders. A few participants categorized hosts by the ministry that they are lobbying such as agriculture, labour or education. Other participants simply grouped all stakeholders that hold receptions in the same category, for example “they are all advocacy groups” or “they all have a vested interest in legislation” (Participants 10 and 11).

One Executive Assistant raised the issue of government funded groups holding receptions. She had a problem with the idea of using taxpayers dollars to lobby government. While federal laws state government funds should not be used for lobbying, many groups “have to do creative financing” to achieve their goals (Participant 5). When asked, most participants did not think this practice was a problem. Many noted that most organizations receive at least some government money whether it is through grants or tax exemptions. Often member associations collect dues from government funded groups and are therefore indirectly funded by the province (Participant 6). A few members likened the reception to a gathering you would hold in your home and noted you would not invite people over without serving food and alcohol. The reception can be a tool for all groups to show their appreciation (Participants 16 and 19).

Zeigler and Baer provided a comprehensive list of groups that lobbied American legislatures forty years ago and it is almost identical to the groups that lobby the Ontario legislature today: “single business or corporation, trade or business associations, welfare or public health, professional, labour unions, insurance, agriculture, governmental units, education, financial/banks, railroads, civil liberties, lumber/timber, conservationists and civic groups (Zeigler and Baer, 30). In fact, with the exception of lumber/ timber and civic groups all of the other types have held receptions at Queen’s Park.

Rush argues it is better to categorize groups by their purpose. Groups can either promote the interest of the population, which he calls the sectional/protective type or they can promote a cause or the promotional/cause type. Promotional groups are often temporary while sectional groups often develop a closer relationship with government because “they are likely to be recognized as representing a particular interest of section of the population” (Rush, 9). This categorization helps to explain the type of groups that one would expect to hold receptions. The more long lasting groups are certainly more likely to host a reception and to do it annually.

The groups that do not host receptions cannot be ignored. For some groups the costs associated with hosting a reception are clearly prohibitive. I had the fortune to help organize a reception that my Member was sponsoring (in name only). This experience revealed that the cost for a modest reception with some food and a limited bar *begins* around \$3,000. Off-site receptions are often even more expensive – receptions at the Sutton Place Hotel have a reputation for lavish food. In a meeting with a non-profit, grassroots organization it became clear that they simply could not afford to host a reception at Queen's Park, despite their great desire to do so. They had even begun to make their own wine to serve, but their plans were abruptly halted when they discovered they had to use the on-site catering services. The organizers of this group made it clear that they felt excluded: “groups either have to pay the money or they don’t play the game.” The fact that non-profit groups are at a clear disadvantage should not be understated. Without a sponsor to pay the costs of the reception, these groups cannot use this lobbying tool.

There are of course other stakeholders who can afford to hold a reception but who do not feel they will achieve results that warrant a \$3,000 to \$5,000 price tag. Participant number 29, a

representative for a private company, felt that the other tactics his company uses, such as meetings with ministers allowed the company to sufficiently achieve its lobbying goals. However, a substantial number of groups and the majority of interview participants believe the things they were able to achieve outweighed the cost of the reception. The fact that a reception gathers many MPPs into one room and reduces the need for individual appointments is a major benefit. The findings from the thirty-one interviews that were conducted reveal a majority of participants believe receptions hosted by stakeholders provide some very noteworthy outcomes.

### **Who attends receptions?**

Receptions are attended by MPPs, political staff, members or representatives of the hosting organization and high level bureaucrats. There was a wide range of answers to the question: how frequently do you attend receptions. Participant 3 stated “I try to go as little as possible, they are a real drain.” He was directly contradicted by Participant 4 who said “I try to go to all of them – I’m big on social interaction.” There appear to be two camps of people: those outgoing people that enjoyed the receptions and those more reserved people who saw receptions as a distraction from their work. The list of participants in appendix D gives more detail.

While there are some Members that attempt to attend all the receptions that are held, they did prove to be the exception to the rule. Interestingly, staff and MPPs choose which receptions to attend in much the same way. They are much more likely to go if the reception is connected to their Ministry or critic portfolio, if they have a general interest in the issue or the host group, or if there will be constituents from their riding present. The groups that are most effective seem to be the ones that inform the MPPs when there are people from the MPPs riding attending the reception. This finding fits with Shaw who said “members are primarily concerned with their role as a representative of a constituency” (in Rush, 110). In addition, the sense of obligation many members felt should not be underestimated (Participant 4). “Sometimes they make you feel guilty if you don’t go... you’ll get a letter afterwards saying: sorry I missed you” (Participant 16).

Some participants did not seem to think it was particularly important for political staff to attend. However, a strong argument can be made that inviting staff to a reception is essential. Participant 4 made the observation that “MPPs can’t do everything on their own.” Participant 9 thought staff should make sure the Member meets important people, write down who they met, and follow up with those people afterwards. Staff often advise MPPs and make them aware of new issues; therefore, their attendance at receptions in order to learn is critical. Many participants made the same argument for inviting bureaucrats because they are often the final decision makers. According to one lobbyist and former staff, receptions hosted by industry groups were more likely than generic groups to have bureaucrats attend because they have closer affiliation with government, such as the Manufactures and Exporters (Participant 9). However, many hosts recognize that bureaucrats want to remain outside the “political sphere” so they hold separate events for them like breakfast workshops (Participants 12, 15, 22). Nonetheless, staff of the legislature do not attend stakeholder receptions. In fact, when explaining my paper topic to the library staff they did not realize that such receptions took place. Staff from the Clerk’s office stated they rarely attend, largely to avoid the perception of bias.



## **Receptions are Important!**

A few staff that were interviewed for this paper did make the argument that receptions are frivolous and wasteful of the Members' very limited time.<sup>2</sup> Many participants were surprised that an academic paper was being written about an activity that they thought of as so commonplace. This perception is likely also responsible for the extremely limited academic literature written about receptions. However, the number of receptions held at Queen's Park and the number of MPPs who attend on a regular basis begin to dispel the misconception that receptions are insignificant. Most participants in this study did recognize that receptions are important for a number of reasons.

From the perspective of the host, receptions are an "efficiency exercise" (Participant 9); they allow groups to achieve a number of their goals in a two to four hour period.<sup>3</sup> With so much competition for Members' time, it can be nearly impossible for a group to schedule meetings with everyone they want to meet. One Minister admitted that he does not accept dinner or lunch invitations (Participant 21). The reception allows groups to overcome this barrier and mingle with a number of MPPs at one time. They are also able to gain a sense of the MPPs' views on issues of concern. Plus receptions are less "artificial" than making an appointment to see someone you have never met or writing a letter (Participant 7).

The reception helps stakeholders gain awareness for their organization or issue. Receptions build the profile of the group which allows them to get the government's attention at a later date; group representatives want to be able to come to Queen's Park and have MPPs and staff know who they are (Participants 6, 14, 22). This is especially true after an election when there are many newly elected Members. Familiarity is always a benefit to stakeholders: "it's harder not to listen to their concerns because we know them personally and they gave us great stuff" (Participant 3). Zeigler and Baer found that legislators and lobbyists who do not interact with one another frequently base their expectations on stereotypes; however, if a relationship develops the unique characteristics of the two parties will be recognized (11).

Many of the receptions that were held during the 2006-2007 season were hosted by groups that represented members, such as the Ontario Association of Professional Engineers or the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association. Receptions allow these groups to fulfill their mandate of advocating for their members. More importantly perhaps, hosts are then able to demonstrate their advocacy and legitimacy to their membership. Many interest groups publish pictures and a write up of their Queen's Park reception and/or lobby day in their newsletters or magazines or on their website. Often the director of the association will be photographed with the most relevant Minister. However, on a more cynical note, "you don't say: 'they only stayed a few minutes and we didn't discuss the issues'" (Participant 7).

Hosting receptions can teach lobbyists how and who to lobby, which is especially true for annual receptions (Participant 22). Groups learn which MPPs are sympathetic to their issues and who is not. Some lobbyists and even a staff member talked about attending receptions to see who is talking to whom. One participant also mentioned that uninvited journalists sometimes attend for the same reason (Participant 9).

The reception can increase opportunities for future contact. "It's easier to ask face to face for a meeting and harder for MPPs to ignore this request" (Participant 3). There was a division

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<sup>2</sup> Although those staff tended not to attend receptions frequently.

<sup>3</sup> Most participants agreed that the goals of the hosts were achieved; the number of receptions that are held and the high cost required certainly indicates that this perception is accurate.

among participants whether they believed receptions increased the likelihood of a host obtaining a meeting with an MPP at a later date. Some participants did say they or their MPP was more likely to meet with a group because they hosted a reception. This fact was true for the Minister that was interviewed as he receives so many meeting requests and receptions can influence him to accept a meeting (according to his staff, Participant 6). However, others stated that they see everyone who requests a meeting, but that the reception improves the quality of future contact. There is different starting point to a meeting when the two parties are already acquainted (Participant 1). One non-profit group actually had a number of phone calls and emails from MPPs and other guests after their reception, citing conversations they'd had and asking for more information (Participant 27).

Some participants did think that receptions influence public policy: hosts “reinforce issues when they come in – those are the issues I take to caucus” (Participant 16). The reception held by the dental hygienists was thought to be effective particularly because of the groups' gains on Bill 171 (Participant 20). However, the majority of MPPs stated that receptions were unlikely to affect their decisions, but most did acknowledge that the exercise contributes to public policy development indirectly. Certainly, receptions are not always an appropriate lobbying tactic: “if an interest group has really serious concerns with public policy you don't deal with it through a reception” (Participant 7). Instead stakeholders might seek immediate solutions through meetings, demonstrations or taking their issue to the media. But generally “you don't convince people by fighting with them” (Participant 14). For groups that want to affect policy in a long term way, possibly to maintain the relationship they have already established or because they recognize the changes they desire will not happen quickly, receptions allow groups to build relationships that will give them the legitimacy to have the influence they desire. “Groups with considerable legitimacy and recognition tend to function quietly within the system” and they use low profile strategies to do this, like advising the government directly (Ball, 48). Even a staff member who repeatedly stated she thought receptions were ineffective, emphasized the importance of relationship building: “if we didn't have our relationships with our stakeholders they might be hesitant to tell us what needs to happen” (Participant 10). These strong relationships then allow a group to influence policy, particularly when the government is looking toward organizations for understanding on an issue (Participant 12). One example of the importance of relationship building can be found in Joan Boase's 1982 study of chiropractors and physiotherapists. Boase found that chiropractors were more successful in securing favourable government policies despite their lower status among their professional colleagues, in comparison to physiotherapists. She discovered it was the chiropractors' “repeated interaction with bureaucrats and members of Parliament” that gave them the status and recognition they desired in the law (339).

From the perspective of elected members and staff, receptions are a form of education. Some participants stated that receptions allow MPPs to quickly learn about pressing issues. “I need to know about all issues that could affect my constituents” (Participant 21). Participant 2 thinks of receptions as a fun way to learn. In fact, he also stated that he was more likely to brief his MPP on the group's issues before they had an individual meeting when he had previously attended their reception. Others said MPPs already know the issues, but the reception refreshes their memory (Participant 17) or allows them to “learn who to talk to and what they do” (Participant 3). It is often very effective for elected officials to be able to refer to a specific group and their issues during house debates (Participant 6).

Receptions allow MPPs and staff to show that they care about the issues at hand. By attending a reception, an MPP can demonstrate that he or she wants to learn about the host and their viewpoint. The MPP can also show that he or she believes the group is legitimate and has valid concerns (Participants 6, 17). Attending a reception can “encourage people... encourage farmers to continue to work hard, especially when things are tough” (Participant 16).

Perhaps the most important benefit that receptions provide is their ability to put a human face on MPPs and stakeholders. Because receptions are much less formal than meetings they allow attendees the opportunity to get to know each other on a more personal level. The conversation is more relaxed. This atmosphere is conducive to breaking down the negative perceptions of both ‘pressure groups’ and MPPs:

“The media gives a militant image [of some groups] but when you meet the official face of the organization at a reception you see that they are human beings, they have a lot of pressure on them. Sometimes that pressure is so extreme they can’t see beyond, as government has to do and you [the staff or MPP] can say these are the other issues we have to deal with. You can push away all those preconceived notions and say: we are both human beings, we both want to provide for our families and do what’s best for our own. And go forward as a team” (Participant 4).

One expert agreed, “I don’t care that the groups get their message across to MPPs. I am much more concerned that the organization gets to know and understand the MPPs” (Participant 7). This understanding is particularly important when one considers all the demands that are placed on the government by stakeholders. One estimate circulated that if the government granted all the presenters at pre-budget consultations what they wanted, the annual budget would increase by forty percent. Receptions do allow MPPs to explain those limitations; a Liberal Member said “I tell people we’re not super human, the ones who think they are often don’t do as well” (Participant 19).

### **Receptions are Unique!**

In addition to being an important tool for MPPs, staff and hosts, receptions in Ontario are unique for a number of reasons. Receptions are one of the very few places that members from opposition parties are able to mingle with each other in a non-partisan setting at the legislature. Participant 7 thinks of the receptions as a “much less confrontational setting and a neutral ground for parties to exchange pleasantries.” In my own experience this observation is certainly true; I have witnessed Members from opposite parties teasing each other about getting angry in the legislature that day.

People’s behaviour at receptions is different from that at receptions held elsewhere. Of course good manners, wearing the right clothes and not drinking too much or being the last to leave are all important (Participant 9). However, one Member stated that it is acceptable for guests to show up any time during the reception, even fifteen minutes from the scheduled ending. A staff member said that it is not necessary to stay for a long time as long as guests have met the key people (Participant 8). By hosting a reception in the MPPs’ ‘house’ politicians “are relaxed, less guarded, less cautious and conservative – they know what to expect” (Participant 15).

There do not seem to be many rules to regulate the receptions. There is nothing stopping a group from holding multiple receptions a year. Nor is there a limit on how much a group can spend on receptions. Participant 3 thought of the drinks, food and trinkets that are handed out as small bribes. These trinkets range from a pen to a hockey puck to a flash drive. While the value

of the item is not substantial there is a line between leaving a token to help attendees remember and buying votes, but as one expert noted “it is hard to draw that line” (Participant 5). One host, who was trying to highlight the difficulty some people have in affording dental care, gave Members electric toothbrushes, but asked that they donate them to a needy family in their riding. While the purpose of this was lost on some Members, it suggests the outright gift of an electric toothbrush may have been too generous. Section 6 of the *Members’ Integrity Act, 1994*, prevents Members from accepting gifts that are “connected directly or indirectly with the performance of his or her duties of office.” However, Members can accept “a gift or personal benefit that is received as an incident of the protocol, customs or social obligations that normally accompany the responsibilities of office.” Certainly in Ontario, receptions can be considered protocol and custom. Many Members also felt receptions were obligatory. As Participant 5 states “part of [the Member’s] duties are to meet [hosts], get informed so it can better inform their decisions.” No one seemed to think of the free giveaways as particularly influential. “Politicians can’t be bought even for \$1,000 donations” (Participant 7).

A former intern, and current projects manager at an association, thought the province of Ontario might be exceptional in allowing political receptions in the legislature. An attempt was made to gauge if the provincial and territorial legislatures across Canada also have receptions in the same manner as Ontario. Surveys were sent by email to approximately five members randomly selected from each legislature.<sup>4</sup> The survey can be found in appendix E. Responses from at least one member and up to three members were received from eight of the twelve legislatures that were contacted. Significantly, none of the legislatures have receptions as frequently as in Ontario. In fact, if stakeholders do host receptions in the legislature at all it is very rare. For Saskatchewan, this is likely because alcohol is prohibited in the legislature; in Prince Edward Island the house only sits for two days per week when it is in session; and in Nova Scotia lobbyists are simply not allowed to host receptions in the building, mainly because it is a small legislature with few resources. In British Columbia, Alberta, Quebec, New Brunswick and the Yukon receptions are almost always held off-site in a hotel or other venue. With the exception of B.C., all political parties are invited to some of these receptions, but more often parties are invited separately. In B.C. one official told me the government was suspected of not even inviting opposition Members to government announcements held in the legislature. While off-site receptions hosted by stakeholders for only one caucus do exist in Ontario, the plethora of the stakeholder receptions in the legislative building is what makes Ontario unique.

It should be noted that there are more receptions held in Ottawa than in Toronto. Participants 12 and 27 thought that the buildings in Ottawa were more conducive to receptions because there was more space and venues such as the local hotels are so close. “In Toronto if you’re not at Queen’s Park you are off-site” (Participant 12). As well, Participant 27 stated a reception on Parliament Hill was half the cost for significantly more wine and stellar food. Details of many of these receptions can be found in MacLean’s weekly “Capital Diary” written by Mitchel Raphael.

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<sup>4</sup> With the exception of Nunavut because Members’ email addresses were not posted online.

## **Making your reception more effective**

While it is true that political receptions at the Ontario Legislature are unique in comparison with other provinces and with receptions held outside the Queen's Park “identity,” groups need to work hard to ensure their reception stands out in comparison to others held in the same location. “We all have so much information pushed at us – [receptions] have to be unique” (Participant 4). When asked for their top five favourite receptions the Ontario Cattlemen’s Association’s annual BBQ on the lawn was mentioned most often by MPPs and staff. The Egg Farmers’ Annual Omelette Breakfast and the Chicken Farmers’ reception tied for second most popular. The common denominator seemed to be distinctive food. Even a special drink at the bar can be exciting, such as the Insurance Brokers’ martinis. Because there is only one catering option in the legislature guests tend to tire of the menu options. However, some receptions are so inventive that a less than opulent spread can be overlooked. For example, the group Environmental Defense had trading cards printed each featuring one of the one hundred and three endangered species in Ontario which they paired with a MPPs. The group then handed out these cards at their reception, which happened to coincide with debate on the Endangered Species Act. Guests at the reception had to trade for the cards they wanted; the Premier was the honorary protector of the Monarch butterfly while the leader of the opposition was the protector of the Eastern Wolf. Members had so much fun trading cards that the antics carried over into the legislature later that evening where a number of Members spoke about the animals that they had been assigned. Clearly, the group’s message got across. My own Member called it one of the best receptions of the year. This example also confirms the idea that “their issues make it meatier rather than their menu” (Participant 10).

Holding a reception on an annual basis is also very effective. People begin to expect a particular reception at a certain time of year and look forward to attending (Participant 15). One Member lamented the groups that only come to Queen's Park when they have a problem: “people here wonder ‘do things ever go well for you’ – members think ‘can I ever really help them’” (Participant 19). Holding receptions annually shows that a group is committed to the long term relationship with government.

A significant number of participants noted the importance of being greeted by the hosts of the receptions and having enough representatives on hand to talk with all the guests present. I actually attended a number of receptions during the year where no one came up to me or my Member to tell us why they had come to Queen's Park. One of the Members I worked for judged the quality of a reception by how well the hosts conveyed their message. Many interest groups teach their members how to lobby before the reception. For example, many of the teacher’s unions and the Ontario Medical Association hold conferences that coincide with a reception and lobby day at Queen's Park. During the conference staff and members will be trained on what to say and how to approach politicians. This training is especially important for groups that have members who are not natural communicators (Participant 22). Participant 6 said “I don’t want to go and stand and have someone give a litany of their concerns.” Certainly the groups that trained their members well were much more effective in conveying their message. Greeting political staff is equally important as one participant made it clear that staff remember when they are ignored.

Hosts must also be careful not to make long speeches. Some hosts invite members from all three parties to speak in addition to the speech from the director of the organization. This tactic usually bores the crowd; however, it can give the group a sense of what each party thinks

about their objectives. Along the same lines, one participant emphasized his distaste for receptions and hosts that “beat us over the head” with their message (Participant 17).

It was agreed by most participants that the gifts that hosts give away are not necessary but they are a nice gesture. Many people thought the giveaways created a connection and helped attendees remember the group and the reception. Participant 4 also thought the giveaways “help to get people to go back next year.”

Many participants said receptions should be well organized and planned carefully. It is important to be accurate on invitations. Because offices are so busy and they receive so many invitations, hosts should follow up with a phone call or email to remind guests of the event. Participant 2 noted the increased sense of obligation that invitees feel from a follow-up phone call to extend the invite. A few participants felt it was very important to have name tags for guests; however, some noted the embarrassment that can occur when the name tags are sitting out on the table displaying who has RSVPed but not attended. Participant 8 felt strongly that there was an obligation for invitees to attend once they had RSVPed, but clearly this is not the view of many Members as demonstrated by the number of name tags that are not picked up at most receptions. It is important to know that all members are free from house duty between 6:00 and 6:45pm so a reception should not end at 6 o’clock. Entertainment is always welcome; displays, slideshows and even live music are just some examples.

## **Conclusion**

It cannot be confirmed that receptions are an essential lobbying tactic for interest groups in Ontario. There was general recognition that receptions are not the only piece to lobbying and not the right approach for all groups because they are expensive, time consuming and largely dependent on luck. When asked, many hosts admitted they were not able to quantify the effectiveness of their reception. However, Participant 22 summed up the general consensus: “you know if you don’t do it [hold a reception] you get nowhere.” Receptions provide important benefits for interest groups including, gaining access to decision makers, building awareness for the hosting organization, learning how and who to lobby, obtaining future meetings and demonstrating advocacy to their membership. MPPs, political staff and bureaucrats also benefit by learning about pressing issues, demonstrating their support for groups and improving the quality of future meetings. In the broader sense all parties benefit when they see each other on a personal level and are able to dispel misconceptions. Finally, the relationship building that occurs at receptions does have an impact on the development of public policy. For all these reasons groups should carefully weigh the pros and cons of holding a reception but they should not discount them as a serious and useful lobbying tool. Likewise Members and staff should do their best to attend the receptions related to their portfolio(s).

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## Methodology

A number of research methods were used to collect information about the receptions held at Queen's Park. Certainly the most enjoyable method was that of participant observation. I attended more than 30 different receptions and events at Queen's Park beginning on September 19, 2006 with the Ontario Community Newspaper Association's reception. I tended to remain at each reception for as long as possible; however, many nights there were multiple events and some were off-site.

For the second research method, I conducted 31 face to face qualitative interviews over a four month period. This method proved to be the most informative in the sense that I was able to gauge the perceptions of the people directly involved with receptions, whether they were the invited guests or hosts. "The best approach to an understanding of the relationship [between legislator and lobbyist] is through study of the expectations of each participant with *respect to the other*" (Zeigler and Baer and Baer, 8). Ten MPPs were randomly selected to be interviewed. An attempt was made to have proportional representation from each party; therefore, 7 liberals, 2 conservatives and 1 New Democrat were contacted. I then attempted to interview the executive assistant of each member. In some cases the legislative assistant to the member was better suited to answer my questions. I started by interviewing the staff members which allowed me to refine and expand the questions I wanted to ask the MPPs and to gather a better perspective on how receptions were viewed by the various offices. I also hoped that staff members would be more likely to encourage their Member to be interviewed if the staff were included and aware of my intentions. Some staff and MPPs proved to be more difficult to schedule interviews with than others. Unfortunately, two liberals were not available and I was unable to formally interview an NDP Member. However, in my placement with an NDP Member I had the opportunity to speak informally with many NDP MPPs about their experiences with receptions. On the whole I was quite pleased with the positive responses I received and the amount of detail participants were willing to share. The questions that were asked of MPPs, experts, hosts and political staff can be found at the end of this appendix.

In an attempt to understand receptions from as many angles as possible, I also interviewed what can loosely be termed as experts, most of whom are either currently or formerly connected to Queen's Park in some way. Included in this group were some legislative staff and two deputy ministers. Many of these experts hold very distinctive positions and explaining their roles further would reveal their identities.

No examination would be complete without talking to those groups that host receptions. Zeigler and Baer emphasized the importance of talking to all the groups involved in the lobbying process in order to "draw accurate inferences about the actual nature of the lobbying process" (7). An attempt was made to choose a variety of types of groups, for example: not-for-profit, professional, industry, agricultural and even a few unions. Interestingly many participants held various roles in their careers, some hosts were once political staff and vice versa. A few participants were even former OLIP interns. Many people that were interviewed recommended other people to talk with. It should be noted that all participants were guaranteed anonymity; therefore, any findings are reported by group and participants will be referred to by their number.

A less formal method of research, but perhaps equally valuable because of the frankness it elicited, was the conversations I had with people about my paper. In fact, many of those conversations led me to new participants or helped me to develop my ideas further. Often people



would automatically share their favourite receptions with me. During the internships' trips I spoke with officials in British Columbia that shed some light on the practices of B.C. stakeholders.

Finally, I emailed surveys to randomly selected legislators at the provincial and territorial legislatures across Canada in hopes of determining attitudes towards receptions across the country. The questions on this survey were uniform for all officials contacted. To increase the likelihood of receiving a response, the questions were intended to be easy to answer and short. For each legislature five officials were contacted; on average 1 replied.

The qualitative method was employed for this study in an attempt to elicit the perspectives and intentions of the people involved in receptions. As Grantham and Seymour-Ure note, meetings between lobbyists and the government are not part of the public record "so one has to rely on anecdotal material" (in Rush, 72). It is my hope that the anecdotes and ideas that are put forth in this paper provide a window into the Pink Palace and contributes to a more well-rounded view of the lobbying that occurs at Queen's Park.

### **Questions for MPPs and Staff:**

1. Can you tell me about your position or former position at Queen's Park? What is your job?
2. How would you define a reception? If you were invited to a reception what would you expect?
3. Thinking about all the receptions you attend, can you categorize the various receptions that you attend?  
*Focusing only on receptions held at Queens Park:*
4. Would you say there are different types of receptions held at Queen's Park?
5. Could you categorize the different types of groups or organizations that host these receptions?
6. How many invites does your office receive per day on average to a QP reception?
7. How many receptions at QP have you attended? How frequently do you attend receptions (daily, weekly)?
8. How do you choose which receptions you go to?
9. What do you think makes an effective QP reception?
10. Do you think it is important for staff to attend? What is a staff's role at a reception?
11. Can you name any receptions you've been to? Can you name your top five favourite receptions?
12. Can you name any good receptions you've attended?
13. Do government funded groups put on receptions at QP? If so, how do you feel about this?
14. Is there anything unique about receptions held at QP in relation to political receptions you've attended elsewhere?
15. Why do you attend these receptions, or not?
16. Do you feel an obligation to attend? Why/why not?
17. What have you learned at these receptions? What have you taken away from these receptions?
18. What do you enjoy about these receptions?
19. What do you dislike?
20. How important was the \_\_\_\_\_ reception in influencing your thoughts on \_\_\_\_\_?
21. How do you feel about the free drinks, food and giveaways?
22. Why do you think groups put on receptions at QP? What are their goals?
23. Are the goals of the hosts realized? Are their goals realistic?
24. Do you think hosts/groups invite bureaucrats? Why?
25. Do you think these receptions play a role in forming public policy?
26. Do you see receptions as a form of lobbying or political activity?
27. Do you find these receptions to be effective for networking for you personally?
28. Are you more likely to meet with an organization because they have hosted a reception?
29. For receptions that are held away from QP – why do you think stakeholders go off-site?
30. Why do you think they are held at QP?

31. What do you think about the lobby days that often accompany a reception?
32. How do you feel about the giveaways or gifts that are given out by hosts?
33. **For MPP** – Do you see reception hosts as potential donors? Are you more likely to go to a reception hosted by potential donors?
34. Who do you consult with to create policy or legislation or even a Private Member’s Bill? How often would you consult with interest groups or stakeholder or industry organization?
35. Do you feel interest groups, etc are intimately involved in the affairs of the legislature?
36. Do you interact with members from other parties at these receptions? Is this important?
37. **For Staff** – Do you take information back to your MPP? If so, what have you reported to your MPP?
  - a. Does your MPP read the information you bring back?
38. Is there anything we haven’t discussed that you would like to share?

**Questions for Stakeholders/Hosts of receptions:**

1. Can you tell me about your job and how you interact with Queen’s Park?
2. What are some of the major issues that you/your organization are facing in relation to government?
3. How do you convey these issues to government?
4. Do you host receptions? Where do you hold them?
5. How would you define a reception?
6. How many receptions have you hosted at QP? In one year?
7. Do you host receptions annually, biannually?
8. What do you think makes an effective QP reception?
9. How many MPPs do you try to get to come?
10. Who else do you invite? How many other people do you invite?
11. How important is gaining access to MPPs at these receptions?
12. What is the percentage of MPPs that actually come?
13. Is it important to have ministers attend your receptions? If so, why?
14. Do you invite staff? Is it important that staff attend?
15. Do you invite bureaucrats? Why/why not? If yes, what is the percentage that actually come?
16. Why do you host these receptions?
17. Do you give attendees gifts or giveaways? If so, why/why not?
18. Who organized your reception (internal staff, external GR firm)?
19. Do you feel your goals are realized?
20. What are your goals? What do you hope to achieve?
21. How do you measure if your receptions are worthwhile or successful?
22. How would you rate the reception as a tool to gain access to MPPs?
23. How would you rate the reception as a tool to reach your goals in relation to your other lobbying tactics?
24. How would you classify yourself/organization, as an interest group, lobbyist, etc?
25. Do you think these receptions play a role in forming public policy? If so, how?
26. Can you name any examples of your influence on public policy?
27. Do you find that meeting an MPP at a reception influences the likelihood of obtaining a meeting with them at a later date?
28. What have you/your organization learned at these receptions?
29. What do you enjoy about these receptions?
30. What do you dislike? Do receptions have failings?
31. Do you attend receptions hosted by other groups at QP?
32. Could you name/categorize the different types of groups or organizations that host these receptions?
33. Why do you choose to host receptions at QP as opposed to another location?
34. For receptions that are held away from QP – why do you think stakeholders go off-site?
35. Is there anything unique about the receptions held at QP in relation to receptions you’ve attended elsewhere?

36. Are the rules at QP receptions different? Do people behave differently at a QP reception?
37. Do you know if there were receptions in the past? Were they different? – Historical Development
38. **For member associations:** How does holding receptions relate to your duty to your members?
39. Is there anything we haven't discussed that you would like to share?

#### **Questions for Experts:**

1. Can you tell me about your position or former position at Queen's Park?
2. Thinking about all the receptions you attend, can you categorize the various receptions that you have attended?

#### *Focusing only on receptions held at Queen's Park:*

3. Would you say there are different types of receptions held at QP?
4. Could you categorize the different types of groups or organizations that host these receptions?
5. How many receptions at QP have you attended? How frequently do you attend receptions (daily, weekly)?
6. What do you think makes an effective QP reception?
7. Can you name any receptions you've been to?
8. Can you name any good receptions you've attended?
9. Do government funded groups put on receptions at QP? If so, how do you feel about this?
10. Is there anything unique about the receptions held at QP in relation to receptions you've attended elsewhere?
11. Why do you think groups put on these kinds of receptions? What are their goals?
12. Are the goals of the hosts realized? Are their goals realistic?
13. Why do hosts seem to want ministers to attend their receptions?
14. Why do you attend these receptions?
15. Do you feel an obligation to attend? Why/why not?
16. What have you learned at these receptions? How would you rate receptions as a learning experience?
17. What do you enjoy about these receptions?
18. What do you dislike?
19. Do you think these receptions play a role in forming public policy?
20. Do you see receptions as a form of lobbying or political activity?
21. Does interaction at receptions influence later interactions between host of receptions and MPPs?
22. For receptions that are held away from Queen's Park – why do you think stakeholders go off-site?
23. Is there anything we haven't discussed that you would like to share?

## List of Receptions at Queen's Park September 2006– April 2007

Date	Title of Reception, Host, Location and Time
September 19 -	Ontario Community Newspaper Association, room 228-230. *
October 4 -	Chinese Canadian Head Tax Payers, hosted by the environment critic for the NDP, dining room, 4-6:30pm
October 4 -	Naturopathic Doctors reception, 5pm, room 228/230
October 4 -	Red meat producers, committee room 2, 3:30pm to 6pm
October 10 -	Diwali Reception, hosted by Consulate-General of India, Premier to attend
October 11 -	Automatic Sprinklers Reception, dining room, 5:30pm
October 16 -	Dental Hygienists Reception, 5:30-7:30pm, dining room
October 17 -	MEDEC Queen's Park Reception, dining room, 5-7pm *
October 18 -	Chicken Farmers of Ontario, room 228-230*
October 23 -	Flag Raising Ceremony and reception, Canadian Hungarian Heritage Association and NDP commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the 1956 Revolution and Freedom fight. Reception to follow in MLB 230 at 5pm
October 24 -	Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police Reception, room 230, 5:30pm to 7:30pm.
October 25 -	Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario Reception, dining room, 6pm.
October 30 -	Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology of Ontario (College Day).
October 30 -	March of Dimes QP Reception, dining room.*
November 1 -	Environment Industry Day - is holding information sessions during the day and wants to have roundtable discussions with MPPs. Reception to follow at 5:30pm in 228/230
November 1 -	Ontario Grape Growers wine tasting reception, 6:30pm to 8pm, dining room *
November 2 -	Canadian Plastics Industry QP Reception, dining room.
November 14 -	Lung Association, World COPD Day reception, dining room, 5- 8pm
November 14 -	Ontario Arts Council PAO reception
November 14 -	Police Association Reception, room 228/230, 5:30pm to 7:30pm
November 15 -	Hotel Association and Wine Council Reception, 228/230, 4:30pm to 6:30pm
November 15 -	Ontario Firefighters Association Reception, dining room, 5-8pm
November 20 -	Ontario Medical Association Doctor's Day - Members to meet with area doctors for 15 to 20 minutes and go to reception at 5:15pm in room 230
November 21 -	Insurance Brokers Reception, dining room, 4:30pm to 8pm
November 22 -	Co-op reception, dining room, 6-8pm
November 22 -	Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario reception
November 27 -	Tourism Ontario Reception, room 228/230, 4-7pm
November 27 -	CGA reception, dining room,
November 27 -	Dairy Farmers Reception, Committee room 2, 5-7pm
November 28 -	Manufacturers & Exporters Reception. Portrait unveiling and Reception for Alvin Curling, Main Foyer, Reception to follow in 228-230
November 28 -	10 <sup>th</sup> Annual Omelette Breakfast (sic)
November 28 -	CME 10 <sup>th</sup> Annual Reception, 5-7pm, dining room
November 29 -	Canadian Institute of Mortgage Brokers reception, dining room, 5:30-7pm
December 4 -	Lights Across Canada Christmas Tree Lighting, hosted by the speaker, Public Relations Branch, main lobby.

- December 4 - Advocis Reception, Financial Advisors Association of Canada is having their Annual Advocis Day at QP, dining room, 5-7pm. Advocis members want to meet with their members of Parliament during the day. Reception at night.
- December 5 - Annual Press Gallery Party room 228, 230 & 247 (“new raffle and door prizes. There will be no silent auction”).
- December 5 - Legislative Library Holiday Reception
- December 6 - Ministry of Community and Social Services Christmas Open House \*
- December 6 - Ontario Trillium Foundation Reception, dining room, 6-8pm
- December 6 - LCBO QP Reception, 228/230, 4-7pm. \*
- December 6 - Minister Bartolucci's Christmas Party
- December 7 - Retirement Reception for Claude De Rosiers
- December 11 - Reception to Celebrate the Clean Water Act, MacDonald Block \*
- December 12 - Speaker's Open House, speaker's apartments \*
- December 12 - Ontario Legislature Internship Programme, room 228-230, 5:30-7:30pm \*
- December 12 - Minister Meilleur's Office Xmas Party \*

### **2007 (House resumes March 19)**

- February 14 - Buxton Liberty Bell Launch, a reception Celebrating Black History Month, 4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Remarks at 5:00 p.m. Legislative dining room. Hosted by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration
- March 20 - Iranian New Year at a Nowruz Celebration, 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Legislative Building, 2nd Floor, room 228 & 230, hosted by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration
- March 21 - Toronto Board of Trade MPP Reception 5-7pm in room 228
- March 27 - OSSTF Lobby Day (meetings between district representatives and MPPs) and Evening Reception \*
- March 27 - Reception and book launch from the Canadian Gas Association, Enbridge Gas Distribution and Union Gas 5-7pm Committee room 230 \*
- March 27 - Big Brothers and Big Sisters, dining room \*
- March 28 - Eye's on the Future MPP reception hosted by the Ontario Association of Optometrists, 5-7:30pm, room 228/230
- March 29 - Parkinson's Disease, Luncheon 12:00 pm to 1:30pm, room 228
- April 4 - Meet the Miners (reception and annual lobby day) Legislative dining room from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Brief greetings from all three parties and from the OMA will commence at approximately 6:15 p.m. In order to help us make appropriate arrangements. \*
- April 4 - Arthritis 101 Breakfast 7:30am with guest speaker and arthritis screenings. Screening to continue until 1pm. “Arthritis 101 is your opportunity to learn how arthritis is impacting the lives of your neighbours, friends and constituents...” \*
- April 4 - Assoc. of Power Producers of Ontario Annual Queen's Park Reception, 2nd Floor, Committee room 230, 5pm-7pm \*
- April 9 - Ceremony of Remembrance 90th Anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge, Front Lawn at Queen's Park, 9:45am (Sunday)
- April 11 - 2007 Board of Directors of the Ontario Construction Secretariat (OCS), dining room, 5-7pm “Invitations to this event have been extended to all MPPs, Ministers, Deputy Ministers and Senior Staff Members.”
- April 11 - 11th Annual J.S. Woodsworth Award recognizing the fight for the elimination of racial discrimination, sponsored by the leader of Ontario's NDP, room 228-230, 6-8pm \*
- April 13 - Leading Girls, Building Communities Award Ceremony, 10am, Liberal Caucus room 247, hosted by Sandra Papatello, (no invitations sent to MPPs) \*

- April 16 - 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Wild Game & Fish Reception, Hosted by Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, Canadian National Sportsmen's Shows, The Canadian Sportfishing Industry Association, Canadian Sporting Arms and Ammunition Association, Ontario Out of Doors, Ontario Fur Managers Federation, and NOOA. rooms 228/230, 5:30-7:30pm \*
- April 16 - Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association reception, dining room, 4-6:30pm \*
- April 16 - Ontario Land Surveyors Reception, 6-8pm, committee room #2 \*
- April 17 - Environmental defense reception. dining room
- April 18 - Social Work Award of Merit ceremony, 12:00- 1:30pm, light refreshments \*
- April 18 - Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association, room 228-230, 5-7pm
- April 23 - Ontario Medical Association's Medical Student Day, meetings between students and their MPPs during the day as well as evening reception at 5-7pm in room 230 \*
- April 24 - Ontario Association of Residences Treating Youth reception, dining room, 5:30-7:30pm
- April 24 - Niagara Hospitality Reception, 4:30 – 7pm, official welcome at 6pm, room 228/230
- April 25 - London Transplant Gift of Life Reception, room 228-230
- April 25 - Ontario Community Services Sector Coalition (a coalition of 12 provincial providers and associations who represent the Community Support Service transfer payment agencies funded by the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care), 4-7pm, dining room.
- April 26 - Victim Services Awards of Distinction, Committee room 2, and 11:30am in conjunction with National Victims of Crime Awareness week, hosted by the Attorney General.
- April 30 - UWO Alumni and Friends Reception, 5-7pm, dining room, hosted by London Area MPPs and President of the University.
- May 1 - The Railway Association of Canada, Celebrating Ontario's Railroad Ties, 5:30-7:30pm, room 228.
- May 1 - Youth Friendly Community Recognition Ceremony and Reception, to be held, 4:30 – 6:00 p.m. Simcoe room, MacDonald Block Queen's Park, "This event will honour those communities that have been recognized, by Play Works, as being youth friendly."
- May 2 - Asian Heritage Month VIP reception, official launch of the Taste of Asia Festival 2007, Committee rooms 228 & 230, Hosted by Mario G. Racco, in association with the Federation of Chinese Canadians in Markham and Association of Progressive Muslims of Ontario.
- May 2 - Ontario Cement Caucus luncheon reception and thirteenth meeting of the caucus, 11:45am to 1:30pm, room 230.
- May 7 - 10 minute skin cancer screening at an event hosted by Toronto dermatologists, 10am to 1pm, rooms 228 and 230, light refreshments will be served.
- May 8 - Canadian Chemical Producers Association, Chemistry Day at QP. Meetings with MPPs during the day and reception from 5-7pm in room 230.
- May 8 - Children's Mental Health Ontario Open House at Queen's Park. "Come by and chat with children's mental health representatives from your community. Enjoy some light refreshments. Learn more about what children's mental health agencies do, the types of services they provide, and how they are working to improve the lives of young people throughout Ontario." 10:30AM – 1:30 PM *A light lunch will be served between 12 noon and 1 PM* Committee room 228
- May 9 - 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Utility Day at Queen's Park, 228-230, 5:30-8pm, hosted by the Electricity Distributors Association, welcoming remarks from the Minister of Energy.
- May 14 - Certified Management Accountants, dining room, 5-7pm "Find out how CMAs are making a difference in communities throughout Ontario" \*
- May 15 - Insurance Brokers of Ontario, dining room, 4-8pm \*
- May 15 - Annual Ontario Legislature Internship Programme Spring Reception, rooms 228-230, 5:30 - 7:30pm \*
- May 16 - Ontario co-operative sector's annual Queen's Park MPP Reception, committee rooms 228 & 230 from 5-7pm, "This is a relaxed social networking event, where you may mix and mingle

- with co-op and credit union sector champions & leaders. MPPs, their staff and other public policy makers are invited to attend. Cocktails and canapés will be served.”
- June 6 - Tent: Ontario Cattlemen's Association Annual Spring Lunch, front lawn

### **Receptions Held Outside QP**

- October 18 - Ontario Medical Association reception for the Liberal Caucus, “to thank you for your dedication over the last year and to show their appreciation”
- November 1 - Reception with LHIN Board Members and CEO's.
- November 7 - Ontario Hospital Association’s Board Chair’s Reception, MTCC hall
- November 7 - Lemon and Allspice Open House followed by AGM – Minister of Education is guest speaker
- December 5 - Ontario Pharmacists' Association reception for their new office.
- December 6 - Graham Murray Limited, Christmas Party, lobbying firm \*
- December 13 - NDP staff Christmas Party, Rancho Relaxo, College St, Toronto
- December 13 - PC staff Christmas Party, Pier 4, Harbourfront, Toronto
- December 13 - Ontario Liberal Party Holiday Cocktail reception, 15 Mercer St., Toronto \*
- January 31 - Reception hosted by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to celebrate Black History Month, 3:30-5:30 (4 p.m. remarks & storytelling), 235 Queens Quay West, Toronto
- February 21 - Ontario Forest Industries Association Annual Meeting 12-4:30pm and reception, 5-8pm.
- March 5 - The Ontario Reception at the Annual Convention and Trade Show 6-8pm Toronto Centre Hotel hosted by the Minister of Northern Development & Mines
- March 30 - Pre Ball Reception and Luncheon – Fire Fighters’ Association Sheraton Centre 12 noon
- April 16 - "Engineering for Ontario Day" MPP Reception at Queen's Park, 5 to 7 pm, Professional Engineers Ontario (PEO), Stop 33 Rooftop Ballroom at the Sutton Place Hotel, 955 Bay Street in Toronto, keynote address will be delivered by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. \*
- May 2 - Diversity in Governance Awards, “Join us as we recognize and celebrate organization that have demonstrated a clear commitment to diversity and shown boldness and innovation in creating an inclusive board.” Guest of Honour: Minister for Citizenship and Immigration, 5-6:30pm, 89 Chestnut St. Toronto
- May 22 - Reception to celebrate the Environmental Leadership of Bill Davis – Green Belt Award recipient, 11:30am, Toronto Botanical Garden, The Floral Hall, 777 Lawrence Ave East.
- May 23 - Butterfly Ball for the Toronto Child Abuse Centre
- May 24-May 25 Polytechnics Canada Annual Conference on Thursday, and Friday, at the Humber Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning in Toronto. You are particularly welcome to the President’s Reception on Thursday evening at 6:00 P.M.

### ***Lobby Day without Reception***

- March 28 - ACORN Canada.

\* denotes participant observation conducted

A Sampling of Reception Invitations



Niagara Region is looking forward to seeing you.  
Tuesday, April 24, 2007

Main Legislative Building, Queen's Park  
Rooms 228/230 between 4:30 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.  
Official Welcome 6:00 p.m.

If you haven't let us know you're coming, please reply to  
Bonnie Redman at bredman@niagaracanada.com or 905.685.1308



To MPPs and Legislative Assembly staff

LCBO Acting Chair & Chief Executive Officer, Philip J. Olsson  
invites you to  
**Discover the LCBO**

Join us and let our knowledgeable staff provide advice on pairing delicious foods  
with fine wines, spirits and beers from around the world,  
including our exceptional Ontario selections.  
Pick up information on how to entertain responsibly and enjoy the season.

Wednesday, December 6, 2006  
4:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.


Legislative Building  
Committee Rooms 228 & 230, 2nd Floor, West Wing

Hope to see you there!

For more information, contact Barry O'Brien, Director, LCBO Corporate Affairs  
Tel: 416-864-6821; Fax: 416-864-2476; e-mail: barry.obrien@lcbo.com



**Ontario Community Services Sector Coalition**  
*Coming Together,  
Support Services in  
the Community*



ONTARIO COMMUNITY SERVICES SECTOR COALITION

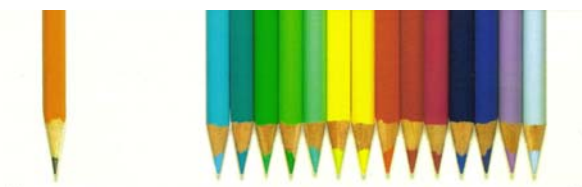
**MPP Reception**

Wednesday, April 25th, 2007  
4:00pm-7:00pm  
Queens Park Legislative Dining Room  
RVSP to 416-256-3010 x 281  
or via e-mail at: info@ocssc.ca

The following organizations  
Alzheimer Society of Ontario  
Addictions Ontario  
Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario  
CNIB  
Canadian Paraplegic Association Ontario  
Hospice Association of Ontario  
Independent Living Service Providers  
Directors Network of Community-Based ABI Providers in Ontario  
Ontario Community Support Association  
Ontario Federation of Community Mental Health and Addiction Programs  
Ontario March of Dimes  
The Canadian Hearing Society  
together have formed the Ontario Community Services Sector Coalition and represent Ontario's community support sector agencies that provide services and support on a not-for-profit basis.

Meet with our members and find out how we can work together to meet the current and future needs of clients who wish to receive services at home and in the community.

Please RSVP by Friday, April 20th to 416-256-3010 x 281 or via email at: info@ocssc.ca



**Financial Professionals. Strategic Thinkers. Leaders.**

That's CMAs in action –  
in businesses throughout Ontario.

To learn from CMAs how they are making a difference in *your* community,  
join us for our  
**Queen's Park Reception**



**Monday, May 14, 2007**  
5:00 – 7:00 pm  
Dining Room  
Main Legislative Building  
Please RSVP by **May 7, 2007**  
Call **416-204-3108**

Refreshments and hors d'oeuvres will be served


*Advocis Queen's Park Reception*

*Advocis Queen's Park Reception*  
You are cordially invited, as a special guest, to attend  
The 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Advocis Queen's Park Reception

Monday, December 4<sup>th</sup> 2006  
in  
The Legislative Dining Room  
from  
5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Advocis, The Financial Advisors Association of Canada, is hosting its Annual Advocis Day at Queen's Park. Advocis members from across Ontario will meet with their Members of Provincial Parliament in Toronto throughout the day to introduce themselves and our Association. Advocis Queen's Park Day will conclude with a reception to which we request your presence.

The favour of your reply is requested, via phone or e-mail, to Natalie Coy at 1.800.563.5822 ext. 260 or at ncoy@advocis.ca on or before Wednesday, November 22, 2006.



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## Appendix D

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<b>Participant</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Date of Interview</b>	<b>Number of receptions attended</b>
01	Expert and former NDP MPP	Jan 15, 10:30am	As many as one per week
02	Liberal MPP Staff	Jan 19, 9:30am	12 – 20 in three years
03	Liberal MPP Staff	Jan 22 10am	I try to go as little as possible, they are a real drain.
04	Liberal MPP Staff	Jan 23, 12 noon	I try to go to all of them.
05	Expert	Jan 25, 8:45am	Not invited to political receptions
06	Liberal MPP Staff	Jan 25, 1:30pm	1 – 2 per week
07	Expert	Jan 30, 2pm	3-4 dozen over six years including off site
08	Liberal MPP Staff	Feb 1, 3:30pm	Thousands, about 40% that are held
09	Lobbying firm staff	Feb 2, 3pm	N/A
10	Conservative MPP Staff	Feb 5, 9:30am	Dozens
11	Liberal MPP Staff	Feb 5, 3pm	6 per year
12	Professional association director	Feb 7, 10am	N/A
13	Conservative MPP Staff	Feb 9, 9am	2 in three years
14	Professional association government relations officer	Feb 15, 9am	N/A
15	Lobby firm owner	March 7, 3pm	Dozens when at Queen's Park
16	Liberal MPP	March 19, 12pm	75%, daily – except on Thursdays
17	Expert	March 20, 10am	Thousands
18	Legislative Staff	March 20, 2pm	N/A
19	Liberal MPP	March 21, 10am	Hundreds, I try to go to as many as possible
20	Conservative MPP	March 21, 4:30pm	I try to go even for a few minutes
21	Liberal Cabinet Minister	March 26, 10am	Hundreds, 1-2 per week
22	Industry association director	March 30, 9am	N/A
23	Liberal MPP	April 3, 3:30	90-100, 1 per week or every two weeks
24	Civil Servant	April 10, 9am	12 per year, 40 in three years
25	Conservative MPP	April 11, 11:00am	Many, many.
26	Legislative staff	April 11, 2pm	None.
27	Non-profit group government relations officer	April 20, 9am	N/A
28	Liberal MPP	April 24, 8:30am	I try to get to most, but harder because of house duty
29	Private company representative	April 25, 9am	N/A
30	Professional association government relations officer	April 26, 9am	N/A
31	Civil Servant	April 30, 10am	10 per year for 20 years

## Email Survey Sent to Legislators Across Canada

My name is Lauren Starr; I am one of the 2006/2007 Ontario Legislature Interns at Queen's Park. We are graduates from Canadian universities who are working with Members of Parliament in the provincial legislature in Toronto. More information about our program can be found at <http://www.olip.ontla.on.ca/>

I am contacting you in regards to the academic paper each intern must complete. I am writing my paper about the stakeholder receptions that are held at Queen's Park. As part of my research I hope to discover if other legislatures across Canada have similar receptions. Interestingly, to my knowledge there is no academic literature written about these receptions or their impact on public policy.

If you could take a minute to answer the following questions, I would be greatly appreciative.

1. Do stakeholders, interest groups or organizations invite elected members of your legislature to receptions?
2. How many receptions, if any, are held in your legislature each night (when the house is in session)?
3. Are members from all parties invited to receptions at the legislature?
4. If receptions are not held at your legislature, are they held in other locations?
5. Are members from all parties invited to off site receptions?
6. What kinds of groups/organizations host these receptions?
7. How many receptions do you attend on average?
8. Do you think these receptions play a role in forming public policy? Why/why not?

Thank you so much for your time. I would be happy to share my research with you upon completion.

Lauren Starr, M.A.  
OLIP Intern 2006/07