

STATEMENT TO THE LEGISLATURE

BY

THE HONOURABLE STEVE PETERS

MINISTER OF LABOUR

REGARDING

TAKE OUR KIDS TO WORK DAY

QUEEN'S PARK

NOVEMBER 1, 2006

(Check against delivery)

Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to address the Legislature today on “Take Our Kids To Work Day.”

I would like to welcome the students in the gallery who have joined us here at Queen’s Park.

I hope you are enjoying yourselves.

This is an important day for Ontario students, for all students in Canada.

Today, thousands of young students are seeing first-hand what it means to go to work.

It is up to us – employers, labour organizations, parents, teachers and the government – to get the message out to students about being safe at work.

Let us start them off on the right foot by talking to them about health and safety in the workplace.

To ensure the safety of our students and young workers, a comprehensive health and safety orientation should be provided when they first enter the workplace.

A comprehensive health and safety orientation should include:

- A tour of the workplace
- An overview of potential hazards
- Emergency procedures
- Workplace safety rules
- First aid provisions
- And all other important health and safety facts.

We have to encourage students and young workers to ask questions when they start a new job.

We have to make sure they know that there is no such thing as a “stupid question” when it comes to workplace safety.

And we have to make sure that young people understand that they have the right to say no to unsafe work.

Speaker, I want to state emphatically that young worker health and safety is a priority for this government.

We are protecting our future by ensuring our youth work in the healthiest and safest environments.

We are actively raising awareness about workplace health and safety among students and young workers.

We are making sure that Ministry of Labour inspectors pay special attention to the orientation, training and supervision given to new and young workers.

Speaker, I am proud to say that as a result of our efforts, Ontario now leads the country in improving workplace safety for young people.

Here are just a few of our initiatives that provide crucial information to our young workers:

- Making mandatory health and safety in secondary school curriculum
- Providing the *Live Safe! Work Smart!* program to teachers to impart to their students the knowledge they need to approach work with a safety-first attitude

- Making information on occupational health and safety and employment standards rights more accessible to young workers and their parents, through our WorkSmartOntario website
- Revising our Employment Standards poster to include a reference directing young workers to the new Young Worker portal on the ministry's website.

I should note that this change was inspired by the students who participated in CBC's Making The Grade project last spring. Students just like you here today!

Speaker, in July, I established the Minister's Action Group on Vulnerable Workers Under 25 whose goal is to find new and innovative approaches to reduce workplace injuries and deaths in this hard-to-reach age group.

Speaker, there is more to be done.

Our government is on the side of working families, making sure their sons and daughters return from work safely every day.

By working together, we can all help get the message across to our youth about staying safe at work. It's up to us to create a generation of young workers that places a priority on safety.

Let us make today a safe and enjoyable day for students – a day to remember.

Thank you Speaker.