

Speech from the Throne

MOVING FORWARD THE ONTARIO WAY



Address of

The Honourable David C. Onley
Lieutenant Governor of Ontario

on the opening of the First Session of the
Thirty-Ninth Parliament of the Province of Ontario

November 29, 2007



Mr. Speaker, Members of the Legislative Assembly, people of Ontario.

Today, it is my privilege to deliver this government's third Speech from the Throne.

This is a first for me — as Ontario's new Lieutenant Governor — and I want to take this opportunity to wish all members of this Assembly well in your work.

And I want to extend a special welcome to those of you who are, like me, new to the Assembly.

Whatever its flaws, parliamentary democracy represents many of humankind's highest ideals.

The notion that no person is deemed to be better than his or her neighbour, the rule of law is clearly superior to the whim of dictators, debate is preferable to distemper, and collective wisdom has far more value than individual impulse.

May you be inspired by these ideals — and by the work done by those who came before you.

Since the last Speech from the Throne, nine former MPPs have passed away.

I ask you to remember Fred Burr, Doug Ford, Anthony Grande, George A. Kerr, Bert Lawrence, Robert MacQuarrie, Robert Mitchell, Ian Scott and Mel Swart.

The people of Ontario are grateful to them for dedicating a portion of their lives to our democracy.

And we are inspired by those who risk their lives in defence of the principles that sustain that democracy.

I speak of the brave Canadians who are standing up for freedom today in Afghanistan, and those who have fallen in its defence in conflicts throughout our history.

Together, we pledge that their sacrifice, and the sacrifice of all of our veterans — commemorated recently at Remembrance Day and by Ontario's Tribute to the Fallen, and enshrined permanently along Ontario's Highway of Heroes — will not be forgotten.



As well, we recall the sacrifice and service of our police, firefighters and emergency workers, who put their lives on the line each day to protect Ontario families.

Finally, we recognize the efforts of the people you have pledged to serve — the people of Ontario.

Children, whose wonder knows no bounds.

Parents, whose love knows no limits.

Seniors, whose work built this province.

The volunteers who take on the thankless tasks, the health care workers who comfort the sick, the educators who share their knowledge, the entrepreneurs who take the risks, the employers who provide the jobs, and the workers who lift us all up.

The hard-working men and women of Ontario who, together, make this the finest province in the best country in the world.

While it is as beautiful as any of its sisters to the east or west, Ontario knows its true grandeur lies not in its landscapes or lakes, but in the diversity of its people.

Our people speak every language, embrace every culture, and have ties to every corner of the globe, but they share a common goal — to build a better life for themselves and their families, predicated on a belief in opportunity for all.

From our proud First Nations to our courageous new arrivals, Ontarians seek to build a strong and caring society, sustained by a strong and prosperous economy.

Ontarians are a positive people, sober-minded about the challenges before us, yet optimistic about the opportunities available to us.

Your government shares that optimism.

It shares your goals.

And it understands that, over the next four years, you want to move forward the Ontario way: by working and building and dreaming, together.



A Better Educated, More Highly Skilled Ontario

And that is why it is so committed to improving the knowledge and skills of our people.

When we improve the quality of public education, when we provide our young people in particular with the skills they need to succeed, we get the best workers, who land the best jobs, who in turn build the strongest economy, which funds everything we want to do together.

But this virtuous circle encompasses far more than material gain.

At its very best, education instils in our children the understanding that we are in this together, that they must take responsibility for themselves, their families and their communities, that we are all connected, and that we share a responsibility to look out for one another, to help one another and to build something greater than ourselves.

Ontarians sent a clear message this past fall: they want our children to come together, learn together and grow together.

So your government is committed to making publicly funded education the very best it can be.

It will continue to work with parents and educators to improve student achievement, ensure more and more of our young people graduate from high school, and make it possible for more of them to keep learning beyond high school in a university, college or apprenticeship program.

Your government will strive to ensure still more of our children meet the provincial standard in reading, writing and math, so that we are assuming our shared responsibility to equip them to succeed in the hyper-competitive global economy of the 21st century, and to measure their progress.

If our children are to succeed in the knowledge economy, ours must be a learning society.

And so your government will work to phase in full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds.



Progress towards that goal has already begun, with the appointment this week of an early learning advisor.

Your government knows Ontario can take on the world and win, but only if every Ontarian is at his or her best, and every child can reach his or her full potential.

So your government will work to reduce the barriers facing students in at-risk communities by dramatically expanding the successful Pathways to Education initiative.

To ensure every student can get help when they need help, your government will make expanded homework help available online and after school.

Your government will work to improve graduation rates in our high schools, and ensure more young people keep learning beyond high school.

To ensure higher education is more accessible, your government will introduce a special distance grant for students from the north and remote areas who must commute long distances.

To ensure it is more affordable, your government will deliver a new textbook and technology grant of \$300 for university and college students to help them get started each year at school.

And to ensure that our publicly funded schools have the resources they need to help our students succeed, your government will continue to improve the funding formula, investing an additional \$3.1 billion annually by 2011 and requiring that the formula be reviewed by 2010.

The true test of this generation's leadership will be the next generation's success.

And your government will invest in that success, every day.

A More Prosperous Ontario

Ontarians are capable of taking the long view and focusing on the task at hand at the same time.



So your government also has a plan for today's economy — a plan for today's jobs.

Good, high-paying jobs fund our schools and hospitals, and put food on our families' tables.

But they do even more than that.

They allow a mom or dad to go home after a day's work and look into the eyes of their child with pride; they allow a community to look to the future with confidence.

So your government is working with business and labour to attract, retain and create good, high-paying jobs for Ontario families and communities.

Like Ontarians, your government is clear-eyed about the challenges posed by a high dollar, high commodity prices and the always intense — and sometimes intensely unfair — competition faced by our manufacturers, foresters and farmers.

At the same time, it is optimistic that Ontario is uniquely equipped to succeed in a world that values hard work, high productivity and relentless innovation.

In sectors ranging from financial services to biotechnology to digital media and other advanced technologies, Ontarians are experiencing growth that far outpaces that of our closest competitors.

As the Finance Minister will outline in his upcoming fall economic statement, the bottom line is maintaining a strong fiscal position for Ontario supported by a growing economy that is as strong and resilient as Ontarians themselves.

The proof of that is the fact that Ontario has 420,000 more good, high-paying jobs now than it had just four years ago, and Ontario has the lowest level of unemployment in five years.

Your government will follow the five-point economic plan endorsed by Ontarians this past fall.



It includes:

1. Major investment in the education and skills of our people.
2. Keeping our taxes competitive, which includes phasing out the capital tax.
3. Supporting innovation and the good, high-paying jobs of the future through, for example, the new \$165-million Ontario Venture Capital Fund.
4. Accelerating the largest investment in the province's infrastructure in 50 years, including MoveOntario 2020, a historic expansion of public transit.
5. Forming key partnerships, such as those formed through the Automotive Investment Strategy, which is helping to leverage more than \$7 billion in new auto investment, and the new Next Generation Jobs Fund, which will create new good, high-paying jobs by developing new clean and green technologies.

Your government will deliver an agriculture risk management program to help our grain and oilseed farmers cope with internationally subsidized competitors, increase support for the rural economic development fund by 50 per cent, encourage more people and businesses to buy food grown in Ontario, and continue to support supply management.

It will help the tourism sector by conducting a comprehensive competitiveness study, increasing funding for festivals and events around Ontario, and expanding marketing initiatives to promote Ontario destinations.

Your government will work with manufacturers to support new and advanced technologies, and with the forestry industry through initiatives like the Forest Sector Prosperity Fund.

What's more, your government will work, through Employment Ontario, to ensure there is more help for displaced workers, and that help is delivered faster, with expanded training and support initiatives.

Your government will bolster regional economic expansion and jobs in northern Ontario by increasing the Northern Heritage Fund to \$100 million, and in eastern Ontario by creating a new Eastern Ontario Development Fund.



Your government understands that we are all in this together and, even though job creation in Ontario is far outpacing job loss, one lost job is one too many.

So it will continue to press the federal government to be fair to Ontario when it comes to fiscal policy, and to become a true partner with Ontario, especially when it comes to fairness in Employment Insurance and support for sectors facing challenges.

In particular, Ontario calls on the federal government to help keep goods and people moving by giving municipalities the equivalent of one percentage point of the Goods and Services Tax to invest in infrastructure and public transit.

Your government understands that communities are engines of economic growth and hotbeds of innovation. Your government will do its share by building on the progress it has already made in working with municipalities.

The government will upload Ontario Drug Benefit costs in 2008 and then begin uploading disability support program costs in 2009 — costs that had been downloaded by the previous government. And it will continue to work through the provincial-municipal review to put our cities and towns on a firm financial footing.

Opportunity For All

To truly succeed as an economy, and as a society, we need everyone at his or her best.

That's what opportunity for all is all about.

It does not mean more prosperity for some and more poverty for others.

Study after study, including a report from the United Way of Greater Toronto just this week, has underlined that we all share a responsibility to work towards lifting more families out of poverty. Your government will continue to assume its responsibility to provide these families with better opportunities.

A new cabinet committee will begin work developing poverty indicators and targets and a focused strategy for making clear-cut progress on reducing child poverty.



The strategy includes a plan that would provide dental benefits to low-income families, and builds on measures already in progress. These include boosting the minimum wage to \$10.25 by 2010, increasing child care spaces and providing more affordable housing. Your government will also fully implement the new Ontario Child Benefit, raising it to \$1,100 per child.

Opportunity for all means opportunity that is accessible to all.

During its first mandate, your government worked with Ontarians with disabilities, Ontarians of tremendous strength and determination, to introduce the Accessibility For Ontarians With Disabilities Act.

During this second mandate, it will work with all Ontarians to phase in positive changes made possible by the act, to improve and expand accessibility throughout the province.

A Healthier Ontario

Just as we can measure an economy's progress by how it treats those who have fallen behind, we can measure a society's depth by how well it treats those who have fallen ill.

We can be proud in Ontario of a system of medicare that treats all people on the basis of need — not because of the size of your bank account or your station in life, but simply because you're one of us.

But that pride must fuel progress, not stand in the way of it, especially when our population is growing older, and the capacity of medical science to prevent, diagnose and treat illness and disease is growing every day.

When a child is diagnosed with diabetes, when a father suffers a heart attack, when a mother faces breast cancer, when a family rushes to the emergency ward, we share a responsibility as Ontarians to respond with compassion, care and commitment.

Your government — all Ontarians, in fact — have responded by training more doctors, hiring more nurses and reducing wait times for key procedures, but there is much more to do.



To ensure that more Ontarians get the care they need, when they need it, your government will expand its progress on wait times to more services such as emergency room visits, children's surgery and general surgery.

To help more Ontarians receive that care closer to home, your government will strive to ensure that 500,000 more Ontarians have access to improved family care from doctors, nurses and other health care professionals, working together.

Your government will hire 9,000 more nurses, work towards its goal to have 70 per cent of nurses working full time, guarantee jobs for new nursing graduates, invest in healthy work environments for nurses, and establish 25 more nurse-led clinics.

Your government believes we need to do more to help seniors who want to stay in their own homes. It will broaden the services available to seniors through home care and provide a caregiver grant to those caring for elderly family members.

For those who require more assistance, it will take action to improve the level of care in long-term care homes by building 35,000 long-term care beds over 10 years, and 2,000 new nurses will provide care in long-term care homes.

And because more Ontarians are struggling with diabetes, your government will introduce a new comprehensive diabetes strategy.

Your government will do more to prevent illness by introducing legislation that would ban trans fats from all school cafeterias, prescribe a healthier menu that conforms to the Canada Food Guide and create an Ontario Fitness Challenge program to fight childhood obesity.

A Greener Ontario

Your government understands that we cannot claim to own the air or the water or other precious resources.

We simply hold them in trust for our children and their children.

Here, on the only planet we know of that sustains life, we have an obligation to preserve that which sustains us.



We know the challenges are large, even global, but Ontarians want to do their part.

Your government will move forward with Ontario's plan to combat climate change by working towards meeting Ontario's goal of reducing the emissions that contribute to climate change by six per cent below 1990 levels by 2014, 15 per cent below by 2020, and 80 per cent below by 2050.

It will achieve this, in part, by making our energy cleaner and greener, moving forward with the province's first long-term electricity plan in a generation.

Your government will replace coal, double renewables, double conservation and modernize our nuclear capacity.

Ontarians understand that we don't have to choose between the environment and the economy — that in fact, we can grow our economy by making it greener.

There are good, high-paying jobs that will go to the places that develop the most innovative green technologies, including the next generation of clean cars, and Ontario will work to seize those opportunities through our Next Generation Jobs Fund.

Your government has already begun work on MoveOntario 2020, the largest transit expansion in Canadian history.

Your government will introduce tough new toxic reduction legislation that would reduce pollution. It would inform and protect Ontarians from toxic chemicals in the air, water, land and consumer products. New legislation would also ban the cosmetic use of pesticides in our cities and towns.

Your government will also move to protect our water and natural areas that make Ontario a beautiful place to live.

It will take strong action to protect Lake Simcoe's water quality for future generations.

And it will work with northern and native communities in Ontario's far north to implement a plan that protects the boreal forest — a key contributor in the fight against climate change.



A Strong Ontario for a Strong Canada

Ontarians care about our planet.

And we love our country.

Ontarians are strong Canadians.

We are patriots.

Working with our fellow Canadians, we have built a country that we are proud to call ours, and a province that we are proud to call home, at the same time.

And we continue to work together with our fellow Canadians, from coast to coast to coast, and in countless ways, for the betterment of all Canadians, including Canadians living in Ontario.

But the foundation of that work together must be basic fairness for all Canadians, including Canadians here in Ontario.

And your government will continue to speak up — and stand up — for Ontario when that basic fairness is undermined.

It stood up, for example, when newcomers to Ontario were not receiving their fair share of services.

It stands now with Ontarians who deserve their fair share when it comes to Employment Insurance, and support for our manufacturers, forestry workers and farmers.

And it will continue to stand up to the federal government when it comes to fair representation in the House of Commons.

An Ontarian is a proud Canadian, no less proud than other Canadians, and certainly no less entitled to the same representation in Parliament.

It's important that we work together to keep our communities safe. To do that, we must be tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime.



Your government will continue to push the federal government to honour its commitment to provide an additional 1,000 police officers in Ontario, just as this government delivered 1,000 new police officers during its first mandate.

Your government will stand up for Ontario because we love Canada, because we understand a strong Ontario means a stronger Canada.

A Stronger Relationship

A Throne Speech traditionally paints the big picture — laying out plans for the next session or mandate.

So not every initiative could be included within this one frame. There is more your government will do.

And it is traditional to use a wide brush, to paint with broad strokes, with the broadest of them all reserved for the conclusion of the speech.

Your government, however, chooses to end this speech by speaking directly to one group in particular.

They do not constitute the largest group or the most powerful.

They are, however, and profoundly, the first people to call this place home.

This government seeks to forge a stronger, more positive relationship with Ontario's First Nations.

Creating a better life for our Aboriginal communities and opportunities that all can access is exemplified by a small agency serving Aboriginal youth. 7th Generation Image Makers employs and trains native youth to create commercial murals.

This company and Adam Garnet Jones, its coordinator, who is with us today in the gallery, are a powerful symbol of what we in Ontario all want to see: far greater opportunities for Aboriginal youth in our province.



As a part of the respected Native Child and Family Services of Toronto, the youth program run by Adam is a business and an example of excellence. It is a living example, in fact, of what your government hopes to accomplish in this mandate: education, training, looking to the future, creativity, respect and pride in Aboriginal arts, culture and heritage, and greater job opportunities for Aboriginal peoples.

Your government, to be sure, is not the first government to seek a better relationship with our First Nations.

But it is, perhaps, the first to have in its possession such a positive road map for progress — the Ipperwash Inquiry Report.

If striking that inquiry was the first step, your government has now taken the second, by establishing an independent Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs.

Ontario will work with you, through the new minister, to act on the report's recommendations.

Of all the people in Ontario, you have perhaps the deepest sense of history.

So you know that Ontario cannot do this overnight, and Ontario cannot do this alone.

Ontario will continue its efforts to encourage and work with the federal government to accelerate the settlement of land claims.

But Ontario will work with you, with respect and in collaboration, to improve the quality of life and expand economic opportunities for all Aboriginal peoples in our province, both on- and off-reserve.

This progress is central to the goal all Ontarians share — to provide opportunity for all, to build a better quality of life for all, to move our province forward, and to do so the Ontario way.

By working and building and dreaming, together.

Thank you.