



Ernie Eves
Premier



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Ernie Eves
Ontario's Premier



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Friday, May 16, 2003

Speech from the Throne - April 23, 1998



SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

Address of
The Honourable Hilary M. Weston
Lieutenant Governor of the
Province of Ontario

on the opening of
**The Second Session of the
Thirty-Sixth Parliament of the
Province of Ontario**

April 23, 1998

I am pleased to welcome you to the opening of the Second Session of the 36th Legislature -- and deliver my first Speech from the Throne since becoming Her Majesty's representative 15 months ago.

Since last we met, Ontario has mourned the passing of five former members of the Legislative Assembly:

- Edward Jolliffe, who sat in this House for five years, led the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, and twice served as Leader of the Official Opposition.
- Nick Leluk, founding executive director of the Council on Drug Abuse, representative of Etobicoke for 16 years and Cabinet Minister in two administrations.
- Jim McGuigan of Kent County, a life-long farmer who served his constituents with dignity and honour for 13 years.
- Joseph Salsberg, a champion of human rights and equality who for 12 years represented the people of St. Andrew as one of only two communist MPPs in Ontario history. He later renounced communism, but remained passionately committed to working people and to his community until his death in February at age 95.
- Eddie Sargent, 15-year mayor of Owen Sound who went on to win seven provincial elections and serve for 24 years as one of the Assembly's most colourful and feisty members.

Their beliefs spanned the political spectrum, but these five shared a mutual commitment to doing what each believed to be right. They stand as examples to us all.

A Strong People

Ontario's greatness derives both from the strength of its people and the richness of its natural heritage. In recent months these two have clashed as the power of nature has twice tested our collective courage and resolve.

January's historic ice storm disrupted lives and devastated communities in Eastern Ontario. We were still re-building when spring floods inflicted further damage and distress on this region, and elsewhere in the Province.

In each case, the fury unleashed by nature was surpassed by the selflessness, generosity and resourcefulness of Ontario's people.

People such as Edwin Grant of Cardinal, who lent portable generators and his time to pump out neighbours' basements and run furnaces -- then drove 200 miles to Oshawa to pick up more generators.

And Anne Tackaberry of Addison, who walked door-to-door through her community, ensuring that the sick and elderly were warm and fed, and opening her home to those needing shelter.

And Rob Anderson and Calvin Johnson of McDonalds Corners, who stayed up all night, March 30, using Mr. Anderson's equipment to pump out the basement of a neighbour's home on Dalhousie Lake, and also putting out a fire.

We pay tribute to these local heroes, to the many police officers, soldiers, emergency workers and volunteers, and to the thousands of individuals who opened their hearts during the recent states of

emergency.

Indeed, this week, National Volunteer Week, we recognize all who give of themselves to assist the needy, guide the young, protect the vulnerable, comfort the infirm, and improve their communities.

We celebrate the impressive achievement of other Ontario heroes: the 50 athletes and the coaches, team leaders, medical staff and volunteers from this Province who wore Canada's colours at the Nagano winter games.

We take special pride in the accomplishments of Ontario's medal winners:

- Derrick Campbell, gold medallist in the 5000 metre speed skating relay.
- Elvis Stojko, silver medallist in figure skating.
- Cassie Campbell, Lori Dupuis, Geraldine Heaney, Jayna Hefford, Becky Kellar, Karen Nystrom, Lesley Reddon, Laura Schuler, Vicky Sunohara: Ontario's members of the Canadian silver medal women's ice hockey team.
- Kevin Overland, bronze medallist in long track speed skating.
- Richard Hart, George Karrys, Collin Mitchell, Paul Savage, and skip Mike Harris, silver medallists in men's curling.

We are equally proud of the nine Ontarians who one week later represented Canada at the 1998 Winter Paralympics.

We recognize these athletes for their dedication and competitive spirit: Jeff Dickson, alpine skiing; and Dean Delaurier, Jamie Eddy, Angelo Gavillucci, Robert Lagacé, Hervé Lord, Shawn Matheson, Dean Mellway and Todd Nicholson, Ontario's members of the men's sledge hockey team, who brought home the silver medal.

Ontario officially endorses Toronto's bid to host the XXIXth Olympic Games and the XIIIth Paralympic Games in 2008. The games would showcase the new city to the world, boost tourism and create jobs.

We recognize not only our olympians and paralympians, but all athletes in the Province, and the encouraging family and friends who contribute to their success.

After all, Ontarians' love of sport is fostered by the support of loving families. Who can forget Mom and Dad flooding the rink in the backyard? Or big brother getting up early to drive his little sister to practice?

The Overland family of Kitchener is just one example. Last month at the Ontario Winter Games, 16-year old Amanda won the gold medal in senior women's 1000-metre short track skating. Older sister Cindy and older brother Kevin were both part of the Canadian team at Nagano.

After the medal ceremony, Amanda credited her sister and brother, saying, "I wouldn't have stayed with it if Kevin and Cindy hadn't kept me inspired and given me pep talks."

There are many more reasons for Ontarians to celebrate -- so many accomplishments in which we take pride.

We recognize the deep honour bestowed upon the Catholic community, in Toronto and across the Province, when Archbishop Aloysius Ambrozic was created a cardinal.

We share the excitement of Dave Williams, assistant professor in the department of surgery at the University of Toronto, as he orbits the earth on his 16-day mission aboard the space shuttle Columbia.

We congratulate Cornelia Wieman, whose contribution to psychiatric and consulting services for Aboriginal people earned her a 1998 National Aboriginal Achievement Award. When she completes her residency later this year, Dr. Wieman will become the only practising Aboriginal woman psychiatrist in Canada.

We welcome the early success of the [Elk Restoration Project](#), and congratulate the many volunteers and agencies working to repopulate the herds of a magnificent animal that once roamed our Province in great numbers.

We remark on the successful rehabilitation of the Upper Grand River, which has restored this once polluted waterway into one of the world's pre-eminent brown trout fisheries. When trout season opens two days from now, anglers from around the globe again will visit Ontario to enjoy the result of a project to which the Friends of the Grand and so many others have contributed.

A Strong Economy

The economy, too, gives us reason for optimism.

All around, we see: Retail sales at an unprecedented level. Consumer and business confidence high. Housing starts up. Welfare rolls shrinking. Agriculture and food industries leading the nation in farm cash receipts and value-added food production.

And new jobs.

A net increase of over 341,000 new private-sector jobs since September 1995.

261,000 new jobs since February 1997 alone.

The fastest job creation rate in all of Canada. And more Ontarians working than at any other time in this Province's history.

During the brief interval since this House last met:

- Chrysler Canada and the Canadian Auto Workers announced the addition of a third shift at their Bramalea assembly plant, resulting in the creation of 1000 new jobs.
- Babcock & Wilcox Company decided to close a manufacturing plant in Texas and relocate most of the work to Cambridge, Ontario.
- The PLM Group printing company in Markham continued its spectacular growth. In three

years, its workforce has tripled to 300, and sales have tripled to almost \$90 million. Years ago, CEO Barry Pike and six other employees mortgaged their homes or otherwise found the cash to launch the company. Today he attributes his firm's growth to the "open for business" policies of the Ontario government.

Growth and success are not limited to large and medium-size firms. Small business job creation has exploded across the Province, on main streets, in suburban malls and in industrial parks:

- Centel Communications, a Mississauga small business owned by Al Battaglia, hired four new employees, bringing its total workforce to 13 -- more than triple its size in 1995. Mr. Battaglia represents the many small business owners who continue to create most of the new jobs in this Province.

Your government was elected on a plan to turn the Province around, strengthen the economy and create jobs.

All evidence confirms: The plan is working.

Your government is doing what it said. Its plan is working. Sound fiscal management is attracting investment. Tax cuts are creating jobs.

The government's ultimate goals remain the same: A strong and prosperous economy. Good jobs for all. High quality services for people. Opportunities for our children. And, as we enter the third millennium, a bright future for everyone.

Dialogue with Ontarians

The plan is working, and you, the people of Ontario, deserve the credit.

Change -- even change for the better -- is never easy. The first steps of progress are often difficult. Improvement requires the courage to change. Adjustment requires time.

For almost three years Ontarians have shouldered the burden of moving this province back on track. We can take pride in the result. Our sacrifices, our contributions, our determination to build a better future for our children and grandchildren, are paying off.

One of people's most important contributions has been their continued advice and counsel about how to build a brighter future for Ontarians.

The magnitude of change required to pull Ontario from the brink of bankruptcy -- the urgent need to kickstart the economy and create jobs -- may at times have overshadowed the role and the importance of public input and participation.

Today the government renews the pledge to Ontarians made on the final page of the *Common Sense Revolution*. We are unconditionally committed to reaching our goal of a better Ontario for all, but we are very open to discussing how we get there.

Many people have already joined in the dialogue about Ontario's future. From participants at open forums and town hall meetings, to public servants offering suggestions on service improvements, to countless callers and letter writers, thousands of Ontarians have offered welcome input that will be reflected in the government's plans for the months ahead.

For example, invited to contribute to the renewal of a strong and united Canada, more than 75,000 citizens have shared their advice. Early in this Session, MPPs will be asked to act on the will of the people thus expressed by considering a resolution to endorse the Calgary framework for unity.

One other thing that people have made clear to this government is that -- while much has been accomplished -- progress continues and work remains.

Most families are beginning to enjoy the benefits of a strengthened economy. But they want to ensure that the same opportunities are available to future generations. And they recognize that too many in this Province remain unemployed or under-employed.

They've said that the government is headed in the right direction, but must take care that its reforms are implemented carefully and well.

They've expressed concern about the timing and pace of restructuring, and about its impact on people who need more time to adjust.

They agree that change must benefit everyone -- that this rising tide must lift all boats.

To these Ontarians, an open reply: Your government is listening. Your government hears you. Your government will move forward with care.

It will move forward with care, but your government *will* move forward.

It will move *forward* because that, too, is what people have said.

They want all who need jobs to *have* jobs -- fulfilling, secure, quality jobs on which to build hope for the future.

They want the tax burden on hardworking, middle class Ontario families and on small businesses reduced to fair and acceptable levels.

They want the budget balanced and, after that, they want government to tackle the debt. They understand that the accumulated debt is a pent-up tax burden waiting to fall on their children and grandchildren.

These goals are shared by millions in this Province who work hard, pay taxes, obey the law, raise families, and are active in their communities.

These goals are shared by millions of ordinary Ontarians who have said that government spends too much time catering to itself and to special interests, and not enough time working for them.

Three years ago, these men and women asked for change, trusting that it would benefit them.

To these Ontarians, a solemn pledge: Your government remembers. Your government will keep faith. It will stay the course until your goals are met.

Jobs and Growth

After all, it is people such as these for whom the government is supposed to be working:

People like 18-year old Daryl Whitehead of St. Catharines, who wants the chance for a good job with good pay and a bright future here at home.

He asks, "Will we have the same opportunities that my parents had, or even their parents?"

Your government is determined to give Daryl as many opportunities as he has dreams.

It does so by creating an environment for job creation that attracts growth, investment, and jobs across the Province.

Your government has already cut personal income taxes, payroll taxes and taxes on new homes. In fact, it has cut taxes 30 different times -- cut taxes to create hundreds of thousands of jobs.

Consumers have responded by spending to stimulate the economy, and businesses by investing and creating jobs.

Witness the testimony of Brian Johnston from Monarch Construction in Toronto: "We have never felt so positive about putting our money back in the province of Ontario, something I could not have said five years ago when we were pouring millions of dollars into the United States."

Your government will hold fast to the pro-growth, pro-jobs policies needed to ensure that Ontarians succeed in the 21st century:

- [Job-creating tax cuts](#) will continue as planned.
- The government is committed to [universities, colleges](#) and [apprenticeship and training](#) programs that prepare young adults for future employment.
- It will address the shortage of highly-skilled workers, particularly in the area of high technology.
- The government will explore every means of employing Ontario's advanced position in telecommunications hardware and educating, training and learning software to support lifelong learning that allows all of us to adapt to the everchanging job market.
- Understanding the role that a clean environment plays in attracting jobs and investment, your government is determined to improve our air and water quality through initiatives such as [Drive Clean](#).
- Recognizing the need for meaningful employment and training opportunities for the young people in rural Ontario, it will act on the recommendations of Sandi Shaw, Todd Ramsey, Lisa Alderman and Luc Lapensee, members of the [Rural Youth Advisory Panel](#).
- The government will continue its aggressive pursuit of economic development in Northern Ontario by investing in the northern highway network and in the telecommunications infrastructure so vital to connecting even the most remote northern towns to the world.

- Your government will support job creation in the tourism industry by marketing Ontario to the world, and encouraging Ontarians to explore the rich wonders of their own Province, including the North.
- It will continue to support working families who do not benefit from the existing institutional child care system -- with priority given to parents who need help either to start working or to stay at work -- and to those wishing to join the more than one-quarter million people who have broken free of dependency on welfare.
- The government will continue to provide the roads and other infrastructure necessary to support a competitive economy.
- MPPs will be asked to consider legislation that: readies our electricity industry for the challenges of competition; eliminates job-killing red tape; amends labour legislation, particularly as it affects the construction industry, in order to attract investment and create job opportunities; and ensures that no future government will be able to increase taxes without the approval of taxpayers through a referendum.
- The government is committed to fair and equal treatment which guarantees Ontario workers and companies the same rights to work and do business in Quebec as that province's workers and companies already enjoy in Ontario.
- The new Ontario Jobs and Investment Board, comprising some of the brightest leaders in business and the community, will seek the views of Ontarians as it leads the development of a winning economic strategy founded on three pillars: encouraging innovation, preparing people for tomorrow's jobs, and creating an infrastructure that supports jobs and growth.

The government's pro-growth policies continue to give hope to people right across this province. They mean that Daryl Whitehead and others can look forward to a bright future here at home.

Educating our Children for the Future

Government must also work for parents and students who demand a high quality education that readies our children and grandchildren for the challenges of the 21st century.

Ontario cannot settle for achievement that is adequate or "good enough." We must judge our education system by results, not effort.

Our goal must be nothing less than excellence.

Only excellence will ensure that all students -- such as Ann Fenton's Grade 7 class at Credit Meadows Elementary School in Orangeville -- are able to realize their full potential, acquire a lifelong love of learning, remain active participants in their communities and achieve whatever goals they set.

Only excellence will guarantee our children the opportunities of decent, well-paying jobs. Only excellence will attract businesses to our highly-skilled workforce. Only excellence will empower us to compete with Michigan and Ohio, Germany and Japan -- with the world.

Only excellence will open doors and lift barriers for boys and girls alike. Only excellence will provide

the opportunities that are so important to founder Larissa Vingilis-Jaremko and other members of the Canadian Association of Girls and Science, a national network of girls who want to learn more about science.

This government's reforms have positioned the education system to deliver excellence:

[More dollars in the classroom and less money for waste, bureaucracy and trustees.](#)

More of teachers' time spent teaching.

Standardized testing. A back-to-basics curriculum. And report cards that parents can understand.

Let us look to the future: With these exciting reforms -- so essential to quality education -- now in place, we can focus all of our energies on ensuring that our children attain the results of which we know they are capable.

With structural reform complete, attention can shift to the three pre-requisites to high achievement: Students with the discipline and commitment to learn. Supportive parents at home. And qualified, dedicated teachers in the classroom.

Your government will continue to support students, parents and teachers in their drive for excellence:

- At home and at school, opportunities for parental involvement in education will be enhanced and encouraged.
- In addition to emphasis on the basics, partnerships with the private sector will ensure children's access to 21st century technology. This will assist all students and teachers in the Province, including Andre Masella, Leo D'Aloisio, Margaret Socha and teacher Agatha Griffiths from All Saints Catholic School in Etobicoke, where computer literacy and technological studies have been a priority for years.
- Standardized testing will be expanded, and more detailed results be made widely available.
- Excellence and achievement, by both students and teachers, will be recognized and encouraged.
- The government has already increased the funds available for early learning. World-renowned expert Dr. Fraser Mustard and child advocate the Honourable Margaret McCain will head a study of early learning, and make recommendations on how best to prepare young and pre-school children for a lifetime of education.

Investment in early learning will help increase children's self esteem, open the door to higher achievement, expand their understanding and horizons, and instill in them a joy of learning that will grow throughout their lives.

- Our schools must be secure environments for learning and teaching -- distinguished by discipline, responsibility and respect for others.

Students deserve excellence. Parents demand it. Teachers can deliver it. We must all work to make it happen.

Making Welfare Work

Many Ontarians are still asking why at times it seems more attractive to be on welfare than to work hard and pay the taxes that support welfare.

Many others are asking to be freed from the cycle of welfare dependency -- from being trapped in a system that fosters dependence and despair.

The government will continue to work for the benefit of all these citizens.

The best way to do so is to lift people off welfare and up into the workforce.

Just ask anyone who has felt trapped in the welfare system:

Such as Bob Fleming from Hamilton, who says mandatory work-for-welfare gave him new hope: "When I was on social assistance, it was degrading. Now, I'm doing a service to the community, I'm getting skills. I'm meeting people who might be able to give me a job one day and I'm getting a reference."

Or such as Marie Johnson, who in less than 18 months has gone from a daily struggle on welfare to a rewarding and responsible job as an office administrator. She says that work-for-welfare "gives people on social assistance a chance to increase their self-worth and enhance whatever skills they may have or develop new ones so that they're current."

Ontarians believe in the work ethic. So does your government.

Your government will move to the next phase of its plan to convert welfare into work:

- It will expand mandatory work-for-welfare. The ultimate goal is to ensure that every welfare recipient does something of value in exchange for his or her benefits.
- It will increase the number of community service placements.
- It will step up the crackdown on welfare fraud and abuse.
- It will work to simplify a welfare system that still remains too bureaucratic and too complicated. Last year, for example, MPPs had to pass special legislation empowering the government to stop welfare cheques from going to people in prison.

Neither the people nor the government of Ontario will tolerate those who enjoy welfare benefits paid for by the Ontario taxpayer while they defy our laws and threaten the safety of hardworking citizens.

- Through a Learning, Earning, and Parenting initiative the government will encourage young, single parents to stay in school and complete their education.

In some municipalities up to one-half of child care fee subsidies are provided to welfare recipients; these parents can and should take part in workfare or learnfare.

Our ultimate goal must be that *all* parents on welfare benefit from mandatory workfare through access to child care.

Some groups and some unions continue to oppose the conversion of welfare into work. The leaders of one union say they will "target" non-profit agencies that help people get workfare placements and experience. Last month, leaders of another union announced plans to try to unionize workfare participants -- giving rise to the prospect of participants collecting vacation pay or even going on strike for higher welfare benefits. These are real challenges that this government must and will overcome.

Health Care for All

People who work hard and pay taxes -- or who have settled into retirement after a lifetime of doing the same -- demand that government guarantee health care that is not only modern but available, timely and close at hand.

When this government took office, Ontarians believed that health care was sufficiently funded -- provided the money was spent more wisely, and waste and inefficiency were eliminated. Even so, this government has increased health care funding to its highest level in history.

There was also broad agreement that our health care system needed restructuring -- that it needed to be updated, better coordinated and more integrated. In the words of Michael Strofolino, President of Sick Children's Hospital, "There were too many dollars in the hospital system tied up in duplication and inefficiency, in bricks and mortar rather than people; restructuring is essential to free that money and re-direct it to patient needs."

Despite agreement on these goals, your government has heard, loudly and clearly, the voices of people concerned about the pace and the impact of change.

Voices of parents who want the security of knowing that hospitals are open and emergency services are available when their children need them.

Voices of grown children who worry whether sufficient supports will allow their parents to grow old in their own homes, or whether nursing homes and homes for the aged will be able to accommodate them.

Voices of patients who prefer a system that is based on people -- doctors, nurses and other health providers -- not just technology and machines.

Your government has heard those concerns. They are real and legitimate. This government will move to address them:

- Despite increasing need and a growing number of seniors, for almost a decade politicians did nothing to expand the number of long-term care beds. Last year the government announced \$100 million in new funding for long-term care facilities. Now, using the dividends from hospital restructuring, this government will soon announce a major initiative to increase significantly the number and the quality of long-term care beds.
- The government will also announce substantial increases in community care, including such services as in-home nursing, homemaking programs, supportive housing and services for people with physical disabilities.

- These measures will ensure that nursing homes and homes for the aged have sufficient space to meet the needs of an ageing population. They also will mean thousands more front-line nursing jobs, both in community services and in nursing homes and homes for the aged.

In addition to serving our seniors, these measures will have an impact that reverberates through the health care system -- freeing beds in hospitals so that they can be more appropriately used for acute care and emergency patients.

- Patient OHIP statements, a "smart" information system and enhanced investigation will help to address health care fraud.
- The government supports the establishment of a health telephone hotline for seniors and others. This was a concept suggested to Premier Harris by Ruby Conway of Port Colborne.

Personal Safety

Government must also stand on the side of women and men concerned about the safety of rural communities and urban streets, or the security of their homes, or violence in school corridors and playgrounds.

Steps are already being taken.

New laws will prevent convicted criminals from changing their names to hide past records, will allow police to warn communities of dangerous offenders, and already protect crime victims through a *Victims' Bill of Rights*.

Young offenders are held in strict discipline programs that emphasize education and responsibility, not entertainment and recreation. Parents such as M. J. R. say the programs give their children the chance for a new future. In the words of Mrs. R., "Thank you for giving us back our son."

New members with a new approach have been appointed to the parole board. As Scott Newark, former crown prosecutor and Executive Director of the Canadian Police Association, recently told the Crime Control Commission at its hearing in Burlington: "The result has been a lower parole grant rate for repeat offenders and, for the first time in years, the beginnings of lower crime rates. It's no accident. Having the courage to make parole a privilege to be earned rather than a right to be demanded has resulted in increased public safety for the people of Ontario."

While we take comfort in this observation, much work remains.

Many crimes go unreported. Many Ontarians continue to worry for themselves and their families.

In the words of Priscilla de Villiers, President of CAVEAT, Canadians Against Violence Everywhere Advocating its Termination: "Safety in the community is more than the absence of injury. We need to look at the culture of fear -- it's simply unacceptable."

Whether in parking lots or sandlots, at bank machines or in backyards, on street corners or in streetcars, we all have the right not just to *be* safe, but to *feel* safe. Your government will respond:

- It will expand strict discipline programs for young offenders.

- It will do everything necessary to support the law enforcement officers who protect our lives and safety at the risk of their own -- committed individuals such as Detective Constable Russ Lillie, an undercover officer shot twice while trying to arrest an alleged drug dealer
- MPPs will be asked to consider legislation that responds to recommendations of the Crime Control Commission.
- Ontario will continue to press the federal government and Parliament who actually make the criminal laws the provinces enforce. We all want a stronger, more effective *Young Offenders Act*, in line with the blueprint for reform that Ontario's government has already provided to the federal justice minister; we want criminal sentences that are meaningful, and actually served; we want criminal deportation to be an action, not a concept. Ontario's government will ensure our voices are heard.
- Your government will integrate and better coordinate services for crime victims under a new office for victims.
- Your government will also take steps toward: the creation of a registry of pedophiles and other convicted sex offenders; increased safety on urban streets and in schools; and protection for victims of domestic violence.

The Threshold of Opportunity

We stand on the threshold of a new century, a new millennium and a new future of opportunity for our children.

Our Province has the capacity, the strength, the resources, the technology and, most importantly, the *people* -- the entrepreneurs, the risk-takers, the skilled workers, the dedicated teachers and healers, the committed police officers and firefighters, the caring volunteers -- to make that future one of promise and hope for generations to come.

Let us pledge together that we will create for our children -- and their children after them -- an Ontario prosperous and proud, the heart of a strong and united Canada, a leader in the world.

This is your government's plan. This is your government's commitment.

Members of the Legislative Assembly, I am confident that your deliberations this Session will serve to make Ontario a better place for all.

God bless Ontario. God bless Canada. God save the Queen.

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