



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 22, 1999



SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

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

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

April 22, 1999

Mr. Speaker, members of the Legislative Assembly, citizens of this province:

I am pleased to welcome you to the opening of the Third Session of the 36th Parliament of Ontario.

This ceremony is rooted in more than 700 years of history. When Edward I summoned the first representative parliament in 1295, he opened with an address outlining the King's own priorities. Today, we live in a modern democracy where the Sovereign reigns but does not rule and the people's elected government acts in the name of the Crown.

Parliament now opens with a speech prepared by Her Majesty's ministers, setting forth the government's policies and plans.

Thus, the Speech that I read this afternoon represents both our democracy's link to the past and its forward evolution -- a symbol of continuity, as well as progress.

We first should pause to honour four Ottawa-Carleton transit workers who, earlier this month, were killed while working to provide for themselves and their families. We remember Brian Guay, Clare Davidson, David Lemay and Harry Schoenmakers.

Since the prorogation of the Second Session, Ontario has lost three distinguished former parliamentarians:

- Margaret Campbell, lawyer and provincial court judge, served as MPP for Toronto's St. George constituency from 1973 to 1981.
- Donald Alexander Paterson, owner and manager of Paterson's Dry Goods and life-long resident of Leamington, represented the people of Essex South for 12 years.
- Charles Joseph Sylvanus Apps, better known as Syl Apps, represented the Kingston area for the same 12-year period, and served as Minister of Correctional Services.

Margaret Campbell was a trailblazer throughout her life. Called to the bar in 1937 at a time when women faced obstacles to a career in law, by 1952 she had established her own law firm.

As Toronto's budget chief, Campbell was credited with modernizing the city's budget process and introducing the widespread use of computers at city hall. In 1973, after serving as family court judge, she was the first woman to be elected as a Liberal member of this Assembly.

In recognition of her pioneering spirit and many achievements, in 1984 the Liberal Party established the Margaret Campbell Fund to support the recruitment and nomination of women seeking election to the Legislature.

Though he left Queen's Park in 1975, Donald Paterson's love of politics and service to his community did not end.

A concerned conservationist, Paterson will also be remembered for planting thousands of trees at the Two Creeks Conservation Area, which he helped to create.

Donald Paterson's final act was the donation of his two corneas for transplant. This noble act on the part of a man who prided himself on his humility serves as a reminder to us all of the importance of organ donation.

A Canadian pole-vault champion, Olympian, and star centre with the Toronto Maple Leafs, Syl Apps left the team at the height of his hockey career to enlist in the Royal Canadian Army and serve during the Second World War.

Returning to the Leafs after the War, Apps also served as Ontario Athletics Commissioner before entering politics.

To honour Syl Apps's love of sport, devotion to duty and years of service to the people of our province, the government will create an office for Community Sport and Recreational Development, managed under the leadership of a provincial coordinator.

Among the coordinator's duties will be the annual presentation of the Syl Apps Awards of Excellence to boys and girls from across Ontario who embody his qualities of athleticism, duty and service.

People throughout Ontario -- indeed, across Canada -- recently marked the retirement of the building where Syl Apps played many of his best games: Maple Leaf Gardens.

A construction project that brought hope and pride even during the darkest days of the Great Depression, the Gardens played host to events as diverse as political conventions and rock concerts ... and for 68 years was home to Syl's beloved Maple Leafs.

This week also marked the end of another landmark era in Canadian hockey -- the Gretzky era. As the greatest player ever, Wayne Gretzky will not only be remembered for his brilliance on the ice, but also as an ambassador for Canada and the game of hockey worldwide.

The memories of our province's rich history that are shared between generations ... and between mothers, fathers and their children, remind us of the special bond we feel toward our parents, grandparents and others who raised us.

With much love and pride, we take a moment to thank those who brought us up ... who cared for us through thick and thin ... and who challenged us to work hard, to do our best and never to give up.

The people of Ontario also value freedom and human rights.

Today, we pray for all the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces, especially those risking their lives to protect minorities in other countries.

Our thoughts are with all peoples on earth seeking refuge from persecution.

Events half a world away remind us that our province has been shaped by the contributions of men and women from around the globe.

This time of year is important to many different members of the Ontario family, including those of the Jewish faith commemorating Passover, Baha'is recognizing the holy period of *Ridvan*, Christians celebrating the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, Sikhs and Hindus marking *Vaisakhi*, Muslims commemorating *Eid-ul-Adha*, and Buddhists marking *Vesakha*.

These -- and other -- religious observances, remind us that, whatever our background, we are united by common principles of family, tolerance, responsibility and compassion.

These principles led your government to conduct province-wide consultations on barriers to accessibility faced by persons with disabilities. Last fall, your government introduced legislation -- the first of its kind in Canada -- aimed at breaking down those barriers.

Concerns expressed about this pioneering legislation, however, have been heard. In response, your government will take the time necessary to gather additional input, and will consult further before reintroducing a bill for consideration by the Legislature.

A Strong, Growing Economy

The economy is strong. But today's successes are merely a prologue to tomorrow's challenges.

Your government continues to work to make Ontario more competitive and to maintain its reputation as an attractive place to invest, do business and create jobs.

Working together, in less than four years the people of this province have made unparalleled progress.

The deficit has been reduced and, provided the government maintains fiscal discipline and continues to make tough decisions, the budget is on track to be balanced in the year 2000/2001, as promised.

The private sector has created 540,000 new jobs in less than four years.

Taxes have been cut -- 69 times.

The average family's after-tax income has increased by more than three thousand dollars.

Ontario now leads the nation in economic growth.

For the first time this decade, there is underlying strength to our economy.

All in Ontario have worked hard -- taxpayers, families, employees, small business owners and government. The people of this province have made great progress to get our house in order after years of neglect. While more work remains, people have said the province is on the right track.

Yet Ontario cannot become complacent.

Prosperity did not materialize out of thin air. Economic progress cannot be taken for granted. Both are the result of clear vision, decisive action, hard work and strong leadership.

As citizens of this province, we cannot let up our efforts or coast if we expect to preserve the economic gains won by Ontario families over the past four years.

Economic success stems from making the right choices.

And prosperity gained all too quickly can become prosperity lost if we make the wrong choices.

Future progress depends on continued vigilance, courage and strength of purpose.

Neither Canada nor Ontario is immune to the pressures of a global economy.

We live in a competitive and volatile world -- one where jobs and investment can exit the province more easily and quickly than they entered, often at the push of a button.

In a global economy, one false move could result in thousands of lost jobs.

Economic progress ... job creation ... and improvement in our standard of living are fragile.

The 1998 annual report of the Conference Board of Canada serves as a wake-up call to all of us.

While describing 1997's economic performance as "solid," the Conference Board notes that Canada had "lost ground" against other countries -- especially our major competitor, the United States.

According to its report, "our poor record of manufacturing productivity growth in the 1990s stands in the way of improving our competitiveness and quality of life in the 21st century. Canadian workers are more productive than most, but less so than U.S. workers. This puts us at a disadvantage in attracting investment in North American markets."

The board warns that our continued inability to generate greater productivity growth is "extremely worrisome. Without improvements, our quality of life is in jeopardy."

"Quality of life" may sound abstract.

The people of Ontario, however, know what it means in real-life terms: Good jobs. Higher take-home pay. More opportunities for our children. Providing for our families. Things that we cherish -- like a first-class education system and health care we can rely on.

Strong leadership and clear action are required to protect them. In particular, four key steps:

First, we must continue to reduce taxes.

The debate is over. High taxes kill jobs. Tax cuts create jobs.

Canadian taxes are much higher than those in the United States, which continues to cut its taxes, a fact stressed by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development last November.

The international body recommends that, "(t)o the extent that the fiscal situation continues to improve, consideration must be given to rolling back the relatively high average tax burden faced by Canadians and lowering high marginal income tax rates."

As one step in the right direction, members will be asked in this session to consider a *Taxpayer Protection Act* that would prevent future governments from raising taxes without voter approval.

This legislation recognizes that the money spent by government does not belong to government. It belongs to the people who earned it in the first place. It belongs to taxpayers. It is theirs. There must be limits to the amount government can reach into the pockets of hard-working citizens.

Second, we must maintain the province's reputation as an attractive place to invest and create jobs.

Our nation relies heavily on investment to create jobs.

In the words of the Conference Board of Canada, our ability to attract investment "will remain one of the central determinants of our industrial competitiveness as we head into the 21st century. We must ensure that we 'get our share'; otherwise, we will be unable to maintain, much less build upon, our successes of the past."

In a competitive global environment, the eyes of the international community are upon us.

Two years ago, the rights of a group of employees at a Windsor Wal-Mart store were ignored when they were unionized despite voting three-to-one against a union. Newspapers such as the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal* and *Washington Post* followed this story closely and spread word across North America and to readers -- and *investors* -- around the world.

Last session, members passed a Workplace Democracy Act, Bill 31, which protects the rights of workers by allowing only the workers themselves to decide whether they will unionize.

While some union leaders and politicians have called for Bill 31's repeal, your government believes that such a reversal would be wrong. Repeal would hurt employees' democratic rights. By sending a negative signal to potential job-creators and investors, repeal of Bill 31 would also hurt people looking for work and young people about to graduate and seek their first jobs.

Quite simply, protecting Ontario's economic gains means staying the course.

Efforts to reduce red-tape and other barriers to job-creation must be redoubled. Members will therefore be asked to consider the *Red Tape Reduction Act* -- the most recent in a number of bills the government has introduced to eliminate job-killing regulation.

Ontario cannot afford to slide back to the old days of tax-and-spend government. To that end, members will be asked to consider a *Balanced Budget Act* that would penalize the Premier and Cabinet if in future they fail to balance the budget.

This legislation simply proposes that governments do what Ontario working families do every day -- balance their books, pay their debts, spend within their means.

Third, within Canada, we must eliminate barriers to internal trade.

Your government's position is clear: The Quebec government's 30-year history of unfair treatment of construction contractors and workers from Ontario, and its foot-dragging in living up to internal trade agreements can no longer be tolerated. This is particularly so since, until this month, companies and workers from Quebec had unrestricted access to our province, while many Ontario construction workers went without work.

Recently, the government announced tough measures intended to level the playing field between our two provinces. As the next step, members will be asked to consider a *Fairness is a Two-Way Street Act* to place new restrictions on construction contractors, workers and aggregate haulers from any place that does not treat Ontario's contractors and workers fairly.

Our ultimate goal is the elimination of barriers, not their entrenchment. Until the playing field is leveled, however, your government is taking strong action to defend the jobs and the livelihood of

its people.

Fourth, to maintain Ontario's economic strength and growth requires a clear plan for the future.

Following extensive consultations, the Ontario Jobs and Investment Board has developed a blueprint to enhance our competitiveness and improve our standard of living.

Its final report, *A Road Map To Prosperity*, addresses the twin challenges of creating meaningful jobs and strengthening the economy -- both vital to give us the means to support the things that matter most to us, such as first-class health care and excellence in education.

Your government will follow the road map provided by the Jobs and Investment Board.

A strong economy is important, vital, and critical.

But a strong economy means much more.

A strong economy is the foundation of everything else people want in life for themselves and their families.

Only a strong economy will give us the means to put even more precious dollars into a strong health care system.

Only a strong economy lets us maintain a strong education system.

Only a strong economy means people can look forward to a brighter future for our children ... a cleaner environment ... a safer province.

Good government is about making the right choices ... about ensuring that what government spends is actually an investment in today and tomorrow.

Learning for All

Only a strong economy generates the resources needed to maintain an excellent system of public education.

Child advocate the Honourable Margaret McCain and renowned expert Dr. Fraser Mustard have prepared a ground-breaking report that examines children's development during the early years of their lives.

Their exciting study provides compelling evidence that the manner in which the brain develops before age six -- in particular, before age three -- has a profound effect on learning, behaviour, coping skills and health later in life.

This government enthusiastically agrees that early-childhood development is a high public priority for all of us, especially parents, grandparents and education and community professionals.

Your government embraces this report. Earlier this week it responded with an Early Years Program that combines existing programs and bold new initiatives.

Excellence in our elementary and secondary schools is characterized by accountability and high standards. This government's plan for better education and excellence will continue.

Building on what has already been accomplished, the government has developed a *Charter of Education Rights and Responsibilities* that outlines principles by which all those involved in classroom learning can work together for the highest-quality education possible.

The *Charter* identifies essential rights and responsibilities of students, teachers and parents. To that end, the government will:

- create a province-wide code of conduct for students that sets clear minimum standards for behaviour and spells out the consequences for breaking the rules;
- give teachers the resources they need to maintain respect and discipline in their classrooms and to ensure a safe, productive learning environment;
- require all teachers to participate in a compulsory competency testing program to stay up-to-date;
- expand student testing to *all* grades;
- ensure that schools promote only those students with acceptable levels of achievement; and
- give parents the right to a more active role in the education system.

Since 1995, your government has introduced a number of education reforms, such as an improved curriculum and standard testing.

Through these meaningful measures, parents can now track their children's progress, evaluate schools in their neighbourhoods and compare boards' performance.

Ensuring quality education for our children requires measuring progress and making certain that all of our teachers have the tools and training they need to get the job done. Just as we now test the performance of our schools and our students, so too should we test teachers.

Your government's plan for post-secondary education also recognizes excellence and achievement. It will continue to improve access, assist students who need it, and work to ensure that degrees and diplomas are direct paths to jobs.

From our early days continuing through adulthood, learning must be a life-long process. This is particularly true as all of us are required to adapt to new technology, new lifestyles and an ever-changing job-market.

Many diverse programs and initiatives throughout the province already contribute to a learning society. Your government will take a leadership role to coordinate these many and diverse fragments.

Your government will also work to ensure that the voice of retired teachers is heard in decisions about the pension plan of which they are beneficiaries.

Breaking the Cycle of Welfare Dependency

Before 1995, respect, dignity and a clear route to self-reliance too often were missing from our welfare system. And too many children were the victims of dependency that was passed from one generation to the next.

Your government has worked to turn welfare from a hand-out to a hand-up.

A strong economy and the introduction of work-for-welfare have combined to free 374,000 people from welfare dependency.

That's equivalent to 12 people every hour escaping the welfare trap. Twelve people an hour whose lives are back on track.

Through mandatory work-for-welfare, more and more welfare recipients are learning new skills and earning valuable references. Many are being introduced to opportunities of which they had never before dreamt.

But the challenging task of turning our welfare system around is not yet complete. Ontario must build upon the progress made to date.

More can be done -- more must be done -- to ensure that welfare is but a short-term stage in anyone's life ... to ensure that welfare is merely a transition phase leading to bigger and better things, including the excitement of getting and holding a job.

Your government will also re-introduce and ask members to consider amendments to the *Child and Family Services Act* which, if passed, would promote the best interest, protection and well-being of children. Your government hoped for and wanted the approval of this law during the last session. Once again, it is seeking the support of all members to ensure that no child suffers because better, clearer laws are not in place.

A Cleaner Ontario

Today, Earth Day 1999, we recognize the importance of our natural heritage.

Having inherited some of the most beautiful lands and waters in the country, the continent and, indeed, the world, we are filled with a sense of both pride and responsibility.

Your government recently announced the largest expansion of parks and protected areas in the history of Ontario -- 378 new parks and protected areas.

As a result of the "Living Legacy" commitment, the people of Ontario now own more than 23 million acres of protected lands and waters, an area equivalent to all of Ontario south of Algonquin Park.

And, last week, one of the most famous urban parklands in the world -- The Rouge -- was expanded through your government's \$26.3 million donation, which includes 1630 acres of land.

As a further step in our conservation plans and to recognize the coming millennium, your government will respond to groups that have asked it to take a leadership role in developing the

Century Conservation Challenge Awards.

This awards program will recognize communities, provincial agencies, individuals and corporations that set and meet conservation goals to commemorate the new century and millennium.

The government is already taking other steps to protect our environment, launching the Drive Clean program to reduce smog in our cities and going to court to ensure that our American neighbours will hold themselves to the tough air quality standards to which Ontario will hold itself.

Although the people of Ontario have already accomplished a great deal, our work to protect the environment teaches us that we must continue to make progress and cannot coast on yesterday's victories.

Health Care We Can Depend On

All of us in this province cherish public health care. We expect it to be there for us when we need it.

As much as we value it, people also understand the delivery of health care is a complex, complicated issue. There are no easy answers.

This complexity is compounded by the fact that government funds the system, but does not control every aspect of it.

Governments in all provinces and territories -- regardless of political stripe -- face many of the same issues and dilemmas.

The Ontario government is working closely with its counterparts in other provinces to share best practices and coordinate efforts to improve health care.

During the last four years, your government has made some difficult decisions to ensure that people have access to an efficient and modern system. This has not been easy, but for too long these decisions had been put off and Ontario's health care system was left to drift and decline.

Your government has made these long-delayed, tough decisions. Today, most experts agree that the health care system is now pointed in the right direction ... And with renewed economic strength, for the first time in many years, Ontario has the ability to re-invest in health care.

This is all at risk, however, unless the economy is strong and vibrant.

It takes a strong economy to give us the means we need to support a health care system on which we all can truly rely. It takes a strong economy to preserve universal access to health care services.

Only a growing economy has made possible the expansion of cardiac care services by 36 per cent ... new dialysis services for 320 patients closer to their homes ... expanded breast-cancer screening for 325,000 women annually by 2000 ... and 20,000 new long-term care beds -- the first in over a decade.

Construction of the first group of 6700 long-term care beds is already underway, and a further 6700 beds will be awarded this spring. Included in the beds to be awarded will be Canada's first long-term care centre for the deaf community. Your government will work with the Bob Rumball Centre for the

Deaf to meet the long-term care needs of deaf seniors.

Furthermore, your government has launched Canada's first comprehensive strategy addressing the needs of people with Alzheimer's disease and their families.

Only a growing economy has made it possible for the provincial government to increase health care spending by \$1.5 billion since 1995, as well as offset the impact of federal funding cuts.

Ontario's government is proud to have led the campaign to reverse the federal government's health care cuts. The federal government has finally started to restore some of the \$2.8 billion that it cut. This is a good first step, but it is *only* a first step.

Your government has promised that every dollar of health care funding that the federal government restores to the people of Ontario will be spent on health care.

This money is already being directed to five priorities:

- hiring more nurses;
- reducing waiting lists;
- relieving pressure on emergency rooms;
- expanding home care even further; and
- accelerating the plan to open 20,000 new long-term care beds.

While the task is difficult and the challenges are complex, your government is determined to continue to provide a universally-accessible health care system that provides top quality service to patients, where and when they need it.

A Safer Province

Citizens expect their elected representatives to keep our streets safe and our communities secure.

They expect their governments and leaders to be clearly and unequivocally on the side of victims -- not willing and eager to defend and make excuses for the criminals who prey on too many.

The Ontario government hears the concerns people have voiced about the prevalence of crime.

It understands that these concerns are real and legitimate -- not fabricated or overstated.

For decades, governments across the country have tried to explain away criminal behaviour. This approach has failed.

Governments need to explain less and to deter more.

Your government is fighting crime -- not turning its back and dismissing people's concerns.

Already your government's actions are placing an additional 1000 new, front-line police officers on our streets, as well as 120 new OPP cadets.

Shortly it will place before you proposed legislation to establish a provincial registry of sex offenders. The bill is named *Christopher's Law* in memory of 11-year old Christopher Stephenson, who in 1988 was brutally murdered by a convicted pedophile free on federal parole.

The government will also announce a comprehensive strategy to combat elder abuse.

The federal government once again has ignored the need and the public demand for fundamental reform of the young offenders law. For its part, the provincial government remains committed to turning young offenders' lives around through "boot camp" and strict discipline programs.

We must not forget the women and men who protect our neighbourhoods and our families -- more so, those officers who lay down their lives doing so.

In order to properly recognize the sacrifice made by police officers who have lost their lives in the service of the people of Ontario, your government -- in cooperation with police organizations -- will construct a memorial to fallen officers.

The monument will be raised only yards away from this Legislature, just south of the Whitney Block. Its location will remind not just citizens -- but also public servants, MPPs, and cabinet ministers -- of the women and men across this province who gave their lives while safeguarding ours and those of our families.

On Track to the Future

As Year 2000 approaches, already preparations are underway for an entire year of celebration and commemoration, of remembrance of our past and optimism for our future.

As we prepare for a new millennium, the people of Ontario maintain these fundamental beliefs:

The global economy is a reality that cannot be ignored.

Our thirst for knowledge has never been as important.

Dignity, respect and self-reliance must continue to be a part of our welfare system.

We must protect our environment.

We need to preserve a public health care system on which every family in Ontario can truly rely.

And the desire to protect the safety and security of ourselves and our families endures.

In the face of these demands, it is essential that Ontario continue to grow and prosper ... continue to develop the means to provide what we all want and need.

Our province already derives much strength from its resources and its people.

But more than these alone will be required to maintain our forward momentum.

To match the strength of its citizens and resources, the people of Ontario need vision, determination, decisiveness, inspiration and courage from their leaders.

Your government understands these expectations.

It has responded to this challenge for the past four years.

And it will continue to do so into the future.

Members of the Legislative Assembly, may wisdom and fairness guide your deliberations throughout this session.

God bless our country. God bless our province. God save the Queen.

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