



Ernie Eves
Premier



[premier's home](#) | [central site](#) | [feedback](#) | [search](#) | [site map](#) | [français](#)

[BIOGRAPHY](#) [NEWS](#) [ISSUES](#) [SPEECHES](#) [PHOTOS](#) [CABINET](#) [E-MAIL](#) [CONSULTATION](#)



Ernie Eves
Ontario's Premier



[Home](#) > [English](#) > [Library](#) : Speech from the Throne - October 21, 1999

Friday, May 16, 2003

Speech from the Throne - October 21, 1999



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

**on the opening of
The First Session of the
Thirty-Seventh Parliament of the
Province of Ontario
October 21, 1999**

Members of the Legislative Assembly, invited guests, fellow citizens:

Welcome to the 37th Parliament of the Province of Ontario.

The throne speech tradition is a symbol of our parliamentary democracy in which the government is accountable to the people's representatives in parliament. Members of parliament represent the ultimate authority before whom the government, through the throne speech, presents in the

government's own words its plans and priorities for the years ahead.

During the interval between parliaments, Ontario has lost two distinguished former members.

Frank Faubert worked hard for the people of Scarborough, as alderman, controller, mayor and an inaugural member of the new Toronto council. From 1987 to 1990, he sat in the legislature representing Scarborough-Ellesmere. Mr. Faubert will be remembered for his role in helping to create North America's largest urban park in the Rouge River valley.

Ross Hall was MPP for Lincoln between 1975 and 1981. The people of Grimsby fondly remember him as their mayor and regional councillor from 1982 to 1988. Ross Hall was a much-loved community leader who offered his financial acumen to school, hospital and university boards in the Niagara Region.

I welcome the new Speaker of this Assembly. Though filled with daily challenges, your job will be made easier by the respect of the peers who elected you.

I also welcome the new and returning members of parliament. Your fellow citizens have placed their trust in you, and I congratulate you on the responsibility you now assume.

Just as parliament has been renewed, so has the chamber in which members serve the people. In restoring this historic room, care has been taken to enhance its architectural features even as it has been modernized. Like the restoration of this great building, this 37th parliament also will leave its mark on Ontario history.

At the outset, your government is excited to announce that, this year, average after-tax family income is closing in on its 1989, pre-recession level. While this is tremendous news for Ontario families, your government believes that it is not good enough. There is more to do. Nothing is as important as ensuring that people are working, well-off and financially secure.

To keep Ontario moving forward in coming years, the government and members of the Legislature will continue to be busy. An active agenda awaits, as much more work is required to assure a brighter future for the people of this province.

This task is made easier by the fact that Ontario's people face the future with resolve and with confidence. Their spirit of optimism is a fitting start to the year 2000.

Throughout the coming year people will celebrate the new millennium. Plans are already in place for hundreds of millennial celebrations ranging from the Red Lake travelling historical exhibition to 50,000 trees planted by the Grand River Conservation Authority. Each local celebration reflects both pride in Ontario and confidence in the future.

Early next century, in 2008, Ontario hopes to host the XXIXth Olympic and XIIIth Paralympic Games. Your government strongly supports the bid and believes the Games -- along with the 2001 Canada Summer Games in London -- will re-establish Ontario as a leader in sports facilities, coaching programs and athletic performance.

To support this exciting project, it has established the Olympic Sports and Waterfront Development Agency, which will work in partnership with the Ontario Olympics Commissioner, the City of Toronto, the federal government and communities across Ontario. The goal is not only to bring the games to Ontario, but also to revitalize waterfront areas that people will enjoy for years to come.

The miracles of modern medicine help many live well, but some patients' survival depends on the selflessness of others. George Marcello waited years for a donor before his life-saving transplant in 1995. This year he walked across Ontario to increase awareness of organ donation.

In response to Mr. Marcello's mission, and on behalf of the people of Ontario, Premier Harris has accepted as a millennium challenge the goal of doubling the organ donation rate by 2005. Your government is developing an Organ Donor Action Plan that, through outreach and education, will raise public awareness and improve registration. A new Premier's Advisory Board on Organ Donation, headed by hockey legend Don Cherry, will recommend complementary initiatives.

We *all* can save lives by filling out organ donation cards and advising loved ones of our intentions so that they may honour our wishes.

Public office is not the property of any individual or party. It belongs to the people. The men and women who hold office, at all levels, do so only because their fellow citizens have placed in them their trust.

Elections are a reminder that government is only as good as the benefit it provides to real people. After all, government exists to serve people, not the other way around.

Government exists to serve people such as Mrs. Gerry Rody, who joins us here today.

Confronting adversity early in life, Mrs. Rody raised five children on her own. Times were tough and life wasn't always easy. But to ensure a better future for herself and her children, Mrs. Rody continued her education while working, became an accountant, and ultimately earned a university degree. She is very proud that she and, as of today, four children as well as five of her grandchildren, have obtained university degrees.

This week, Mrs. Rody celebrates her son Talson's retirement, after his own 40-year career as an Ontario land surveyor. After decades of labour and sacrifice, parents take great pride in seeing their children mature, succeed in life, raise families of their own and approach retirement themselves.

Mrs. Rody asked no assistance from government, but worked hard, paid taxes, obeyed the law, raised a fine family and contributed to her community. She, and people like her, are real Canadian heroes. They are the strength of this country and this great province.

Yet, all too often, these are people whom governments have failed to hear.

The current government pledges always to remember that it works for the people, not the other way around. It will keep its promises. Its focus remains making life better for hard-working families.

Your government looks to the future and sets the goal of bringing real benefits to real people:

- New jobs. Good, secure, well-paying jobs. Jobs in high technology. Jobs in construction. Jobs in companies that have newly invested in Ontario. Jobs allowing welfare recipients to get their lives back on track.
- New infrastructure designed to meet the needs of tomorrow's entrepreneurs, students and workers. Modern schools. New roads. Information networks.
- Secure and restful places for people to live. More parks. Safer streets. Assistance for those

without shelter.

- A greater sense of community. Students helping their neighbours. Graduates finding work close to home. Parents playing an active role in their children's education.
- New protection for taxpayers. Balanced budgets. More money in people's pockets for them to spend, save or invest as they see fit. The lowest personal income-tax rate in the country.

These are the benefits to real people that your government strives to achieve. This is the stronger, growing Ontario that it wants to build.

A strong economy is the foundation of prosperity. It is the key to affording services important to people, including accessible health care and quality education.

Ontario's economy is stronger in 1999 than in 1995. New-home construction is up. Business investment is up. Consumer spending is up. Job creation is up. The Conference Board of Canada said in May, "Clearly the Ontario economy is presently the strongest among the provinces."

Though the economy is strong, there is much more to do. Families, employers, investors and opinion leaders say that:

- Ontario must keep attracting investment,
- Ontario must keep cutting taxes,
- Ontario must continue to promote consumer confidence, and, above all,
- Ontario must become even more competitive.

"Competitiveness" may sound abstract. To real people, it means getting and keeping good jobs, protecting their standard of living and improving the quality of life. This is why your government will do what it takes to keep Ontario's economy strong.

It will continue to cut taxes. Not only do tax cuts create jobs, but low tax rates are essential to economic competitiveness.

The Ontario government rejects the federal government's argument that taxes should only be cut when the economy is strong. On the contrary, it believes that tax cuts are vital to keep the economy strong. It sees low, competitive tax rates as "recession protection," helping to insulate Ontario in the event of an economic downturn. Low taxes also help Ontario keep up with its neighbours.

Your government has already begun to cut residential property taxes. Ultimately it will reduce the provincial portion of residential property taxes by 20 per cent, providing relief to homeowners and renters throughout Ontario.

Prior to the 1999 Budget, the government had already reduced by 31.7 per cent the provincial income-tax burden on a typical family. Now the government is phasing in a further 20-per cent income-tax reduction.

And it will continue to cut the small business corporate tax rate to 4.75 per cent, half its 1997 level.

Your government believes the federal government must do its share to reduce the tax burden. In addition to reducing the federal personal income tax rate, Ottawa must reduce Employment Insurance payroll taxes to create jobs.

Once taxes are cut, people need assurances taxes will not go up again. Your government will introduce a *Taxpayer Protection Act* that would prevent governments from hiking taxes or imposing new ones without voter approval.

When the current government first took office, the provincial deficit approached \$11.3 billion. With continuing vigilance that will require additional, difficult decisions, in just seven months your government will table a balanced budget for 2000-2001 -- a tremendous way to start the new millennium.

Your government, however, acknowledges that the job of controlling the size and cost of government never ends. To ensure that the budget stays balanced, it will introduce a *Balanced Budget Act* that would penalize politicians who run deficits.

Despite progress in cutting job-killing red tape, much work remains. Government bureaucracy still imposes, by one estimate, 40,000 "official" forms. Forty per cent of small business owners say they spend more than six hours per week on government paperwork.

To free individuals and businesses from unnecessary red tape, your government will create a permanent red-tape watchdog. Its expanded mandate will include subjecting all new regulations to a strict business-impact test.

All branches of government must treat people fairly and with respect. To that end, your government will introduce a *Declaration of Taxpayer Rights* that protects individuals and businesses in all their dealings with government agencies.

Your government will continue to work tirelessly to attract investment, such as the Denso Manufacturing plant in Guelph and AstraZeneca's new Mississauga manufacturing facility. These companies join hundreds of investors drawn to Ontario by our lower taxes and business-friendly climate.

In March the Jobs and Investment Board issued *A Road Map to Prosperity*, which outlined strategic goals to ready all participants in the Ontario economy for the exciting challenges of the 21st century. The Minister of Economic Development and Trade will work with other ministers to establish a public-private sector task group that will recommend the best long-term approach to stay competitive, create future jobs and promote high technology and innovation.

Ontario stands as a world leader in scientific research and development. Still, your government wants to make better use of the talents of Ontario's scientists and researchers to foster a culture of innovation. It has asked Dr. Heather Munroe-Blum of the University of Toronto to look at innovation-supporting programs from around the world and to recommend ways to expand Ontario's ability to innovate in all sectors of the economy.

Along with an innovation culture, a strong economy requires an infrastructure designed to meet the needs of both today and tomorrow. Indeed, history shows that Ontario prospered when its leaders took concrete steps to prepare for the future.

To renew Ontario's network of hospitals, high technology links, highways, transit, education institutions and other infrastructure, your government has established a \$20-billion public-private SuperBuild Growth Fund. It will spend that money more wisely, more creatively and more strategically so that Ontario's infrastructure is ready to meet tomorrow's needs.

Nearly six of every ten Ontario small businesses are already connected to the Internet. Your government wants Ontario at the forefront of this revolutionary technology. It has already endorsed a voluntary electronic commerce code of conduct to set a framework for fair business practices on the Internet. Now it is setting an ambitious goal to ensure that Ontario's consumers and businesses seize the opportunities and enjoy the benefits offered by the Internet.

Your government will save even more taxpayer dollars by continuing to run government more like a business. To make programs more efficient, it has already introduced business planning to the public sector. Through new Ontario Government Information Centres, it will provide one-stop access to information and services. Your government remains open to outsourcing and privatization, and will continue to restructure its organization -- always with the aims of improving service, creating efficiency, and putting customers first.

New technology can improve efficiency and prevent fraud. The Premier has appointed the Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet to spearhead the introduction of new "smart-card" technology, and given him consolidated responsibility for all efforts in this field.

The warmth of its people and the beauty of its surroundings make Ontario a natural tourist destination. With tourism one of the fastest-growing industries in the world, your government will enhance marketing and tourist infrastructure to draw even more visitors and create even more jobs.

The Ontario government shares drivers' concerns about high gas prices. This is a federal responsibility, and Ontario welcomes Ottawa's commitment to act by September 2000. To help identify an appropriate solution, your government will establish its own full investigative review of gasoline pricing, and share the results with the Canadian government in advance of its own next-year deadline for federal action.

Earlier this year, to encourage the Quebec government to treat Ontario's construction workers and contractors fairly, the Legislature passed the *Fairness Is A Two-Way Street Act*. While some progress has been made, clearly the playing field still is not level. Your government will continue to take a tough stand to ensure that Ontario workers and contractors receive fair access to Quebec projects.

Your government acknowledges the need to improve and modernize labour relations in the construction industry across the province. It will also introduce legislation to expand workers' right to decide by secret ballot whether they want to continue to be represented by a union.

The government will introduce franchise disclosure legislation to foster an even stronger and more competitive franchise marketplace.

Ontario's agri-food industry contributes \$25 billion annually to the provincial economy, and employs more than 640,000 people. Your government will continue to work to ensure that Ontario's farms and agri-businesses remain strong. It will update food safety standards and inspection programs, and work with farmers to improve rural water quality.

Ontario's farmers work hard to succeed, and deserve fair treatment. Last year, Ontario farmers supplied 23 per cent of Canada's agricultural production, but received only 16 per cent of federal government agriculture safety-net expenditures. The provincial government continues to defend

Ontario farmers' entitlement to a fair share and urges Ottawa to end discriminatory distribution of federal support money.

This government recognizes the feeling among many residents of northern and rural Ontario that they lose many of their best -- their brightest children and their richest resources -- to the big cities. In response, it will act to bring more doctors to under-served areas, to improve and build more highways and other infrastructure through the SuperBuild Growth Fund, to continue to use the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund to support economic growth as well as community and regional priorities, and to promote tourism in rural and natural heritage areas. It also will introduce legislation that officially recognizes the right to hunt and fish in Ontario.

A strong Ontario must be a cleaner Ontario. Building upon the creation of the largest number of parks and protected areas in Ontario's history, your government has acted decisively to strengthen hazardous waste management rules and to prohibit the transfer of water from the Great Lakes basin. This momentum will continue.

Further partnerships with municipalities and conservation authorities will secure the quantity and quality of in-land provincial water sources for current and future generations.

Your government will fortify environmental protection by creating a SWAT enforcement team and introducing legislation that combines the current patchwork of environmental rules into one clear, comprehensive and easily-enforced law.

It will introduce legislation that imposes on polluters some of the strictest penalties in the country, including doubled fines and tough jail terms for repeated law-breakers. And it will improve the Drive Clean emission-testing program to meet drivers' concerns while still achieving smog-reduction targets.

Jerry Weber symbolizes people's dreams of a bright future for themselves and their families. Faced with a struggling new business and an ill son, Mr. Weber was forced onto welfare. The next year, he entered a workfare self-employment program, took training and learned to write a business plan. After much hard work, Jerry received a start-up loan, and now owns a custom furniture business.

Jerry Weber's story is an inspiration. It stands as a reminder that the goal of work-for-welfare and other welfare reforms is to benefit real people -- to get lives back on track.

Thanks to welfare reform and a strong economy, more than 437,000 people like Mr. Weber are bettering their lives and fulfilling their dreams after escaping the trap of welfare dependency.

But there is more to do. Your government believes that even one person who wants to work, but is trapped on welfare, is one person too many. An independent, comprehensive United Nations report says Canada's six-per cent poverty rate is second-lowest in the world, but your government believes that even six per cent of people living in poverty is six per cent too many.

That's why the government is working to help people like Shannon Hunt make the leap from welfare to a brighter future. Teen parents on welfare must return to school to remain eligible for benefits. The new Learning, Earning and Parenting (or LEAP) program offers child care, parenting courses and other supports while they complete their education.

Acknowledging that she would not have been motivated to finish school without these supports, Ms Hunt says she is now glad she did so. Your government wants all communities to offer LEAP supports so that every teen parent walks through the door to opportunity that a good education unlocks.

Your government knows that people cannot get off welfare and into jobs if they are struggling with the challenge of drug addiction or illiteracy. It will provide mandatory remedial training for able-bodied welfare recipients who need basic instruction in reading or math, and mandatory treatment for welfare recipients addicted to drugs.

Each year the Ontario government spends \$100 million to help people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. However, this is a complex issue that requires the active involvement of municipalities and the federal government. Your government will continue to work cooperatively to address the needs of these vulnerable people.

The desire to ensure opportunities for all members of society also underpins your government's ongoing effort to develop an *Ontarians with Disabilities Act*. Consultations on this important initiative continue. The goal is to introduce a new action plan this session.

Immigration is vitally important to the country and to Ontario. Generations of new Canadians have contributed greatly to the nation and are responsible for much of its prosperity. Sadly, 17,000 legal immigrants in Ontario are dependent on welfare because of sponsorship default. These are men and women who came seeking a better life but -- through no fault of their own -- were abandoned by the sponsors who agreed to take responsibility for supporting them once they were here.

Your government believes that federally-approved sponsors who agreed to support legal immigrants to this country cannot walk away from their financial commitments and leave taxpayers to foot the bill. Sponsors accepted responsibility, and must honour it. Alternatively the federal government, which sets the sponsorship rules, is liable. The Ontario government will pursue compensation from Ottawa.

Your government is determined to expand work-for-welfare to all able-bodied recipients. It will take steps to increase its placement targets, open park and road maintenance programs to workfare participants, and tie municipal funding to participation levels.

To ensure fairness for those who play by the rules, the government will introduce a zero-tolerance policy that permanently bans anyone convicted of welfare fraud from collecting welfare again.

Your government knows that people want to work. It understands that further welfare reforms are needed to free good people from dependency. While some may argue that these changes are controversial, your government understands that getting a life back on track is never easy. Encouraged by the successes of Jerry Weber, Shannon Hunt and hundreds of thousands of others, it will continue to move forward.

Making sure that every person in Ontario has access to top-quality health care is your government's most urgent concern. At the same time, it recognizes that a strong economy is essential to a strong health care system -- because only a strong economy provides the ability to pay for health care and the priority services that matter most to people.

Between 1995 and 1999, provincial health care funding increased to \$18.9 billion, the highest level in Ontario history. Not only did your government replace the \$2.8 billion that the federal government had cut, it added \$1.5 billion in new funding.

However, the population is ageing and the cost of medical care is growing. Your government will increase health care funding by at least an additional 20 per cent, to \$22.7 billion, by 2004. However, money alone is not the answer to creating a better health care system.

Tough decisions have been made -- and are still necessary -- to build and sustain a modern health care system. With an ageing and growing population, the job of preparing health services for the future is not complete. More must be done to ensure that every dollar spent on health care is spent effectively.

People deserve not only increased health funding, but also a guarantee of excellent care. Your government will introduce a *Patient's Bill of Rights* that protects patients' rights to access health services, to complete information about their health, and to respect for their privacy, personal dignity and safety.

To address the physician shortages too common in towns and villages, your government will offer free tuition to students entering medical school, provided they agree to relocate and practise for five years after graduation in under-served areas.

To build on the hiring of 12,000 new nurses and to support them and their colleagues, your government will increase funding for nurse practitioners and insist on the creation of a Chief Nursing Officer in Ontario's hospitals.

Your government will also introduce changes to laws that stand in the way of families, police and social workers, to ensure people posing a danger to themselves or others get the care they need.

Your government has already kept its promise to guarantee 60 hours of hospital care for new mothers. Most hospitals with obstetric services now offer the 60-hour guarantee; the remaining hospitals are finalizing implementation plans.

Along with the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program, the guarantee forms part of your government's broader plan to improve health care for young children and families.

The foundation of a better Ontario and a brighter future for our children is an education system that strives for excellence. In addition to learning new concepts and skills, Ontario's young people also must understand the responsibilities of citizenship, and be able to distinguish right from wrong. Your government will continue to improve Ontario's education system by raising standards, investing in children and promoting principles of respect and responsibility.

Your government believes that, to realize their full potential, children must get off to the best possible start in life. The most important period of development is the three years immediately following birth; that's why it's so important to nurture and support children's development from the moment they are born.

Building on the pioneering work of world-renowned expert Dr. Fraser Mustard and child advocate the Honourable Margaret McCain, the government is committed to a bold new initiative that ultimately will extend early-development opportunities to every child and parent in Ontario. Recently-announced demonstration projects are merely the beginning. Your government is determined to remain the national leader in early-child development.

As children move to higher levels of learning, your government will continue to help parents gauge their children's progress by testing both schools and students against defined provincial standards. Standardized student tests will be extended to all grades.

With the benefits of school and student testing already clear, your government will move forward with the next logical step -- regular testing of Ontario's teachers. The Minister of Education will continue to consult about this initiative.

Any parent whose child has had a difficult year in school knows the difference that a good teacher makes. Ontario has excellent teachers, but -- in a rapidly changing world -- children benefit from teachers with up-to-date skills, training and knowledge. Your government's plan includes regular testing of teachers' knowledge and skills through written and other assessment methods. Remediation will be offered to those who fail assessments, and de-certification will result if remediation is unsuccessful.

Parents appreciate the new elementary school report cards that clearly spell out how well each student is performing. Plain-language report cards are being extended to secondary schools, starting this year in Grade 9.

In keeping with its efforts to channel resources to Ontario's excellent classroom teachers, your government will continue to hold school boards accountable for how funds are allocated at the local level.

Your government continues to support parent councils and direct parental involvement in the school system.

TV Ontario was created in 1970 to add value to the education system. Your government will return TV Ontario to its educational roots and expand its mandate to facilitate training, re-training and life-long learning.

This year, a higher percentage of Ontario's young people are enrolled in post-secondary programs than ever before. As more people seek specialized skills and knowledge, your government will work with Ontario's post-secondary institutions to plan for increased demand. The commitment: Every willing and qualified Ontario student will continue to be able to attend college or university.

Your government's programs and policies increased student aid to the highest level in Ontario history. To recognize and support hard-working students further, starting next September it will offer Aiming for the Top scholarships to the top 10,000 students in Ontario who need financial assistance. The private sector will be challenged to match government's \$35-million annual commitment.

At the same time, to be fair to hard-working students who play by the rules, the government will crack down on Ontario Student Assistance Plan fraud.

As the demands on our education system continue to grow, the SuperBuild Growth Fund will provide new and improved infrastructure to meet the needs of students.

Your government believes that students deserve to graduate with the skills and knowledge they need to get jobs. It will expand the number of community college and university courses with direct job links. And it will start measuring and publishing job-placement results for graduates of all college and university programs.

Students cannot learn and teachers cannot teach when they worry for their safety. To create a more secure school environment, your government will introduce a Code of Conduct for students that establishes minimum standards of behaviour and consequences for infractions.

People have a right to go about their business, walk through their communities, send their children to school, and go to bed at night, free from the fear of violence against their person, their families or their property.

Some say that crime is no longer a major problem. Your government disagrees. It hears from far too many Ontario families who lack peace of mind that they are safe in their neighbourhoods. It knows that much more can and must be done to protect people from violence, property damage and other crimes.

Your government stands solidly on the side of victims, and solidly behind the men and women who risk their lives to enforce the law.

Barbara Irwin, who joins us today, was widowed when Detective Michael Irwin was killed in the line of duty in 1972. She was left to raise four children -- three of whom went into policing. Her quiet courage belies the violence that assaulted her family 27 years ago. Her dignity is an inspiration to all.

To support victims such as Mrs. Irwin, your government will introduce legislation that permanently establishes the Office for Victims of Crime and gives it a new role in ensuring that the principles of the *Victims' Bill of Rights* are respected. To honour brave men and women such as her husband, the government is erecting a permanent memorial to police officers killed while serving others.

Through additional funding and enhanced training, in less than one year the government has helped place 534 new front-line police officers on the streets of Ontario communities. Its goal is 1000 new officers by 2000.

To protect the right to walk down the street or visit public places without being harassed or intimidated, your government will introduce legislation empowering police to crack down on squeegee people who harass and badger motorists and to stop aggressive panhandling. Your government will also develop a comprehensive youth justice strategy to turn young offenders into responsible and accountable law-abiding citizens.

Your government will introduce and urge members to give speedy passage to *Christopher's Law*. This legislation would create Ontario's first registry of pedophiles, rapists, child molesters and other convicted sex offenders, allowing police to notify communities about the presence of high-risk sex offenders. The proposed law is named in memory of 11-year-old Christopher Stephenson who, in 1988, was abducted and brutally murdered by a pedophile free on federal parole.

Your government will place before the Assembly a *Parental Responsibility Act* that would make parents financially responsible for property damage and other consequences of their children's crimes.

It will also introduce measures that strengthen the ability of municipalities and the province to crack down on establishments where it can be shown that illegal acts -- including the use and sale of illegal drugs -- habitually occur.

Your government will continue to replace ageing jails with more secure facilities. It will expand strict discipline rehabilitation programming for young and adult offenders. And it will ensure that criminals are accountable for their own actions by exploring all reasonable ways to make them contribute to

the costs they have imposed on taxpayers.

The Crime Control Commission will continue to consult with experts in crime prevention and with the public about ways to make our communities safer.

The Ontario government is troubled that the federal government actually appears to be reducing the penalties for some serious indictable offences.

Your government supports the goal of a streamlined court system -- but not at any price. Ontario does not support reducing the maximum penalties for serious or violent crimes.

The Government of Ontario has worked actively with the people of this province and with other governments to strengthen Canada. To make social programs more effective for Canadians, Ontario, along with the federal government and other provinces, signed a Social Union Framework Agreement. In a spirit of cooperation and mutual respect, Ontario will work with other governments to implement and improve this agreement.

Making life better for real people involves working hard today as well as planning for tomorrow. Your government's agenda is large and ambitious, but its breadth reflects the twin demands of meeting current needs and building for the 21st century.

The challenges ahead are daunting, but Ontario is up to the task. People are energized by new feelings of hope and of pride in their province, coupled with the determination to leave a stronger Ontario as the inheritance for future generations.

Though this speech outlines a *government* agenda, there is no mistaking the philosophy of the men and women who set it. Those elected in 1995 to deliver major change and re-elected in 1999 to continue the revolution do not view themselves as "government." They believe that they are the people who *came to fix government*, and that the job is only just beginning.

This government is unconditionally committed to keeping its promises, working for the people, representing hard-working taxpayers, and making Ontario families better off. It continues to remain open to discussion about the best way to achieve these goals.

Members of the Legislative Assembly: Your coming efforts truly will lay the foundation for a new Ontario. May you always remember the interests of those who sent you here, and strive to improve government so that it benefits real people.

God Bless Canada. God Bless Ontario. God Save the Queen.

[<< Back to Library](#)

[[BIOGRAPHY](#) | [NEWS](#) | [ISSUES](#) | [SPEECHES](#) | [PHOTOS](#) | [CABINET](#) | [E-MAIL](#) | [CONSULTATION](#)]
[[home](#) | [feedback](#) | [search](#) | [site map](#) | [français](#)]

[LARGE FONT](#) | [Mobile/Text Only](#)



This site is maintained by the Government of Ontario, Canada.

E-mail the Premier at: webprem@gov.on.ca E-mail the Webmaster about the Web site at: premier.technical@cab.gov.on.ca

Mailing address: Office of the Premier, Legislative Building, Queen's Park, Toronto ON M7A 1A1

© 2003 [Queen's Printer for Ontario](#) ~ Last Modified: Tuesday, January 14, 2003