



INTRODUCTION

Mr. Speaker, Members of the Legislative Assembly, invited guests, fellow citizens.

In the past few weeks, Ontario has faced an outbreak of SARS. This global disease has created a significant health-care crisis.

While remaining vigilant, your government places its faith in the extraordinary courage and professionalism of Ontario's nurses, doctors, paramedics, medical researchers, lab technicians, scientists and other front-line heroes. To them, and to the families who stood by through long days and sleepless nights, all Ontarians owe a tremendous debt of gratitude. These men and women are turning the tide in Ontario's battle against SARS, and proving to the world that Ontario is a safe place to live in and visit.

To the families who have lost loved ones to this disease, we extend our deepest condolences.

To continue healing the damage caused by SARS, your government has pledged to help hospitals deal with SARS-related backlogs, compensate workers and protect and promote our economy. It will introduce legislation today that would, if passed, protect workers' jobs and strengthen powers to curb the spread of SARS and other infectious diseases. In the days and weeks ahead, your government will take further steps to address these challenges.

It is at times like these that Ontarians' values shine through.

Ontarians are competitive, but compassionate. We are successful, but believe that no one must be left behind. We are proud of our achievements, but believe in the promise of an even brighter future for our province.

It is the promise of Ontario that has encouraged people and families from all over the world to begin new lives here. It is the promise of Ontario that has inspired hard-working men and women to build successful businesses and strong communities. It is the promise of Ontario that inspires our citizens — young and old — to hope, dream and achieve.

It is this promise that motivates your government and that has brought the members of this Assembly here to serve Ontario's people and help build its future.



On behalf of our Sovereign, welcome to the Fourth Session of Ontario's 37th Parliament.

REFLECTION AND REMEMBRANCE

Since the Assembly last met, Ontario has lost three distinguished former members:

Frank Drea, whose straightforwardness with colleagues made him a popular MPP and whose efforts as an advocate for consumers, workers and the disabled made him a respected leader;

Ron McNeil, who represented the people of Elgin County for three decades and whose hard work on behalf of fellow farmers won him the appreciation of people of all political stripes; and

Russ Ramsay, whose gentlemanly service, kindness and strong principles endeared him to the citizens of Sault Ste. Marie and the people of Ontario and elevated him to the Order of Canada.

In January, four employees of the Ministry of Natural Resources died in a helicopter crash near Sault Ste. Marie while carrying out their duties. Your government mourns the loss of Michael Maguire, Walter Ceolin, Bruce Stubbs and Chantelle Walkey and will dedicate a new conservation reserve to their memory.

Ontario also recently lost one of its most beloved leaders. Gerald Emmett Cardinal Carter was a remarkable scholar who worked relentlessly in pursuit of social justice. For 53 years, he worked tirelessly to serve the people of Ontario, regardless of religious faith. His determination to tackle controversial issues head-on won him the respect of leaders and lay people alike, and his loss is felt not only by the Catholic community, but by all Ontarians.

We remember those killed during the war in Iraq. While your government deplores war's tragic cost, it also hopes that conflict — led by our American and British friends and allies — will achieve a lasting peace for the people of Iraq, who have suffered under tyranny and oppression.



THE PROMISE OF ONTARIO

The Throne Speech is a symbol of our parliamentary democracy. In it, your government traditionally tells citizens about its plans and priorities for the years ahead.

Yet this year's Throne Speech is different.

Your government believes that strong leadership is about consultation, not capitulation. It is about principles, not ideology. It is about balancing priorities for all, not giving in to the interests of a few.

Most importantly, it is about encouraging people to share their ideas, work together and speak their minds. That's why your government launched its innovative Throne Speech consultation process.

Today, as never before, the people have spoken.

Ontarians said they want a strong economy that creates jobs and lets them keep more of their hard-earned wages. Your government has listened.

Ontarians said they are proud of our province's health care system and want it strengthened. Your government has listened.

They have called for schools that promote excellence and equality of opportunity. Your government has listened.

They have asked that our natural environment be preserved for future generations. They have demanded that government be more accountable for the tax dollars it spends. They want the province's streets to be safer and its borders secure.

To these requests, and more, your government has listened.

Some might say that listening is an end in itself. Your government believes it is only a good beginning.

Today, your government sets out an ambitious action plan to keep our province competitive and compassionate — to display the values of hard work, humility and excellence seen so often in our citizens and epitomized in the success of 2003 Masters champion, Ontario's own Mike Weir.



Your government has a plan to build a better quality of life for every Ontario family.

To create an equal opportunity for success.

To support the most vulnerable.

Today, your government resolves to devote its energy and experience to seeing the promise of Ontario fulfilled.

STRONG ECONOMY

Since 1995, your government has helped create more than 1.1 million new jobs, dramatically cut taxes, removed barriers to growth, eliminated an \$11 billion deficit, started paying down Ontario's debt and helped over 600,000 people get off welfare and find the dignity that comes with a job.

While these are remarkable accomplishments, they do not belong to your government, but to all the Ontarians who seized the opportunities afforded by a strong economy.

Only a strong economy supports investment in priorities such as health care, education, secure communities and the natural environment. Only a strong economy provides the means to make record investments while maintaining a balanced budget.

For the first time since 1908, an Ontario government has introduced five consecutive balanced budgets. It will continue to balance the books.

Your government has paid down \$5 billion in provincial debt and will continue to pay down Ontario's debt to ensure long-term growth and prosperity.

Your government remains committed to further reducing the income tax rate for small businesses to five per cent in 2004 and four per cent in 2005. Upon full implementation, more than 125,000 businesses will benefit.

The evidence is clear and convincing — by living within its means, by cutting taxes, balancing priorities and refusing to borrow from future generations to pay for today's success, your government has restored faith in Ontario's economy.



Despite the economic success our province has enjoyed, history has shown that without strong leadership, such gains are easily lost.

Today is tax filing day. Today, Ontarians are especially aware of how much tax they pay — and how much your government has cut taxes in the province.

There are some who feel it is perfectly acceptable for government to consume ever-larger portions of Ontarians' paycheques.

Not your government.

It believes that when Ontarians decide how to spend their own money, we all benefit — and the best way to ensure that they have money to spend is not to tax it away in the first place. Your government believes that tax cuts spur job creation and result in greater revenue. While it has reduced taxes by \$16 billion, government revenues have increased by the same amount over the same period.

That's why this year's budget proposed 17 additional tax cuts for seniors, businesses and wage earners. That's why, since 1995, your government has announced 225 tax cuts, giving workers and their families more money to spend, save or invest.

Olive Russell of Brampton, who joins us here today, says: "I think my husband, Frank, and I have more than paid our share of taxes over the last 60 years."

Your government agrees. It will introduce legislation that would provide a tax credit for seniors for the provincial portion of their property tax. It will also introduce legislation to allow more seniors to remain active in the workforce — retiring at a time of their own choosing, not an arbitrary, government-appointed time. It would also give them the resources necessary to stay in their homes and remain active, productive members of society.

To honour the contributions of our veterans, your government is investing \$1 million in the Juno Beach Centre in Normandy, France. The centre honours Canadian soldiers who landed on D-Day, inspiring all Canadians through their example. Through the Dominion Institute, your government pledges to record the stories of these heroes for the youth of the future.

Your government believes that a job is the best social program. Continued job growth, spurred by tax cuts and a strong economy, will help unemployed citizens get back on their feet and participate in the promise of Ontario.



Your government recognizes that there are some Ontarians who need extra help to cope with disabilities. It understands that people with disabilities often have special needs that make it difficult for them to work. That's why it will increase Ontario Disability Support Program payments to better help people with disabilities lead happier, more productive and dignified lives.

Your government will reform support for children with special needs to ensure that parents have a greater say in how their needs are met.

Because no child should live in poverty or depend on welfare, your government will provide a special benefit to meet the unique needs of children who require a helping hand. In the coming weeks, your government will unveil further details of this enriched and compassionate benefit.

To ensure that support keeps going where it is needed, your government will continue to crack down on welfare fraud and abuse. Those who commit welfare fraud are stealing from those who need help the most. Every penny your government has recovered from welfare fraud will continue to be returned to the system.

To protect Ontario's family farms and the rights of farm workers, your government is implementing legislation to ensure that our unique agricultural sector is protected from labour disruptions.

To ensure that farmers are protected from circumstances such as droughts or fluctuating markets, your government will provide stability for Ontario farmers. It wishes to work with the federal government to find solutions, but will always be there to support Ontario's farmers.

Your government will also continue working with farmers and provide them with financial support to carry out a nutrient management strategy that will keep our environment protected and our farms strong.

Linda Lockey of Ridgeville wrote your government to say that: "Everyone wants to 'protect the farmland,' farmers included. It is every taxpayer's responsibility to protect and save the farmland for future generations."

The challenges faced in rural Ontario are not the same as those faced in urban communities. That's why, in the coming weeks, your government will unveil a comprehensive rural strategy aimed at addressing the concerns raised by people in rural communities. Your government will strengthen the rural economy, protect



services and preserve the cherished way of life so important to Ontario's countryside.

To help protect farmers, small businesses and families, your government is also taking a comprehensive approach to our energy sector, including increasing supply, creating an integrated conservation plan and ensuring that pricing is stable.

Your government knows that a growing economy has growing energy needs. We must never take our energy supply for granted.

Your government will ensure that Ontarians have a supply of power today, tomorrow and into the future. It will work with the private sector on the Portlands Energy Centre Project and the Niagara Tunnel Project. It will pursue agreements with the provinces of Manitoba and Quebec to help supply Ontarians with the power they need.

Your government knows that the energy needs of the 21st century will require comprehensive and innovative solutions. Your government will aggressively pursue technologies to meet Ontario's energy supply needs for generations to come. It will explore options such as wind, hydrogen, solar and generating electricity from waste.

Providing additional generation is only half of the solution. Ontarians have said they want affordable, practical energy conservation measures and cleaner sources of power. Starting immediately, your government will phase out coal-fired generating stations no later than 2015.

Solutions are already on the market that will help Ontario achieve its energy conservation goals, but more must be done to get energy efficient products into the homes of consumers who want them.

Moorefield resident Joan Norris has asked your government to: "Educate the public. Everyone has to be more conscious of saving electricity."

Your government has heard her request and will develop an integrated energy conservation strategy that will include government, the broader public sector and consumers. It proposes to enable people who want to produce their own electricity to more easily sell power back to their local utility — as is done in Europe and the U.S. — develop more tax incentives and a renewable portfolio standard for green energy.



In addition to all these measures, your government will continue to cut taxes, balance the books, reduce debt and help create new jobs so that Ontario will enjoy the best-performing economy and the highest quality of life in North America.

This is an ambitious goal, but an achievable one. Ontario is already well on its way.

Your government will achieve this goal, not because it is ideologically driven, but because it is motivated by values and principles — the same values and principles it shares with all Ontarians.

BETTER HEALTH CARE FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY

Hospitals are more than bricks and mortar. They bring us together in times of joy — such as the birth of a child. They bring us together in times of grief — such as when we say goodbye to a loved one for the last time.

Nurses are more than dedicated professionals — we trust them to care for the people we love.

Doctors are more than medical practitioners — we turn to them in times of need.

Ontarians have invested more than our tax dollars in our health care system — it has become part of our identity and the envy of the world.

Your government understands this, and thanks to a strong economy, it has been able to invest another \$1.9 billion in health care this year — over \$10 billion more than in 1995. Your government has created the first new medical school in 30 years and has increased the number of medical school spaces by 30 per cent. It has also provided funding to create over 12,000 nursing positions and by 2005 will have created 750 nurse practitioner positions.

Your government believes that each Ontarian — from the youngest to the oldest — deserves the best, most up-to-date care. It has worked hard to modernize the system and find new ways to deliver excellent, universally accessible health care for our families.

By making record investments in long-term care, increasing home-care services, and providing innovative services such as Telehealth Ontario, your government has made it possible for hospitals to direct resources where they are most urgently needed.



Andrea Butcher Milne, who has multiple sclerosis and is the mother of a four year-old, says: “I feel that my local health care centre’s role in maintaining my health has prevented thousands of dollars you might normally have spent treating the symptoms of my illness.”

Your government believes that, despite significant new investments, Ontario’s health care system is only a success if it helps all Ontarians. Health care investments must help reduce and eliminate waiting times, increase access to doctors and nurses, strengthen our hospitals, cure diseases and result in new technology that improves patient care.

To improve access to doctors, your government will increase the number of international medical graduates training to practise in Ontario by 20 per cent. It will provide free tuition for current and future medical school students who agree to practise in underserved areas or join Family Health Networks.

To increase the number of nurses practising in Ontario, your government will launch an aggressive nurse recruitment and retention program. This will include free tuition for nursing students who agree to begin their careers in underserved areas. Your government will work to break down the barriers faced by nurse practitioners to expand their numbers and the range of services that they are able to provide.

To support the health care needs of children in the north, your government will invest nearly \$6.5 million to support the Electronic Child Health Network North. The network provides an electronic link between health care professionals and families in the north, and hundreds of pediatricians and health care professionals in southern Ontario. This is one step in your government’s plan to create a children’s health network.

Between 1996 and 2002, your government cut cardiac surgery waiting times in half. Your government’s investments have reduced waiting times in emergency rooms.

But there is more to do. No child, parent, senior or any citizen of a compassionate province should have to wait one moment longer than necessary to receive care.

That’s why your government will engage Ontario’s health professionals in developing guaranteed wait times for procedures such as general surgery, cataract procedures, cancer treatment and hip and knee replacements. It will do the same for diagnostic services such as MRIs.



There are few people in Ontario who have not been touched by cancer through a friend or family member. Yet many experts believe that certain kinds of cancer — such as breast or prostate cancer — can be beaten.

As the late Dr. Charles Hollenberg, world-renowned cancer researcher and former head of Cancer Care Ontario said: “Finding a cure for breast and prostate cancer can be done. It just takes leadership.”

Your government will provide that leadership. Our province’s researchers have the expertise to help eliminate these deadly diseases. That’s why your government will invest \$1 billion in a new Cancer Research Institute of Ontario.

Prevention and early detection are vital to effective treatment. That’s why your government has added 30 new MRI machines since 1995 and has committed to an additional 20 MRIs and five new CT scanners.

Your government will improve hospitals and free up capital dollars for other priorities by allowing the private sector to provide and maintain the buildings — while relying on the public sector to provide quality care. Your government will continue to provide the services Ontarians depend upon and remains committed to universally accessible health care where and when Ontarians need it.

To ensure that St. Peter’s Hospital in Hamilton continues to provide care for young disabled adults and to meet the needs of some of Ontario’s most vulnerable citizens, your government will invest in improved continuing care facilities at the hospital.

Your government will also measure the success of health care improvements and ensure that health care dollars are spent wisely. That’s why it has introduced stable multi-year funding for hospitals and will introduce legislation to create a permanent Health Quality Auditor to ensure excellent and efficient service.

To help remove the stigma of mental illness and ease the suffering of those afflicted, your government is addressing the mental health needs of children and adults. In its budget, your government announced that it would invest \$250 million over five years to move forward with reform. Your government will launch a Premier’s Council on mental health that will act as a driving force for change.

The Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy helps aboriginal communities address health service needs through traditional aboriginal teachings and mainstream health services. Your government will renew the strategy and enhance its operation through consultation with Aboriginal Peoples and their communities.



Your government knows that, when it comes to health care, there is always more to do.

There is always a need for new treatments and equipment to cure our sick. Your government will meet challenges that arise through compassion, accountability and a continued dedication to the men, women, seniors and children who rely on our health care system.

EDUCATION FOR THE FUTURE

This is Education Week.

Every child in Ontario deserves an excellent education and an equal opportunity for success in life, regardless of economic circumstances, geographic location, ethnic background or religious belief.

Generations of leaders, entrepreneurs, teachers and professionals succeeded because of the quality education afforded by our public elementary and secondary schools.

Yet, before your government was first elected, Ontario's educators found themselves frustrated by a system that pursued social promotion, not academic excellence, and whose inconsistent, board-by-board approach to funding privileged some schools over others.

In 1995, your government set out to improve our education system, acting on the principled, compassionate conviction that all Ontario's children must be given the means to fulfil their dreams.

That's why your government introduced a new, provincewide funding formula that treats all students equitably. It introduced a rigorous new curriculum, innovative programs such as Early Reading and Early Math and measures to ensure teaching excellence.

In the past, many young people were labelled as unteachable.

Not anymore.



Today, we know that 10 to 15 per cent of the population has some form of learning disability. We know that many learning-disabled children are of above-average intelligence, but also require extra support.

Your government is providing \$1.6 billion for special education for 2002-03 to make sure these children have the help they need to learn and succeed.

To ensure that your government's education funding reforms were on track, it commissioned Dr. Mordechai Rozanski's Education Equality Task Force to prepare a report on Ontario's elementary and secondary schools.

Dr. Rozanski confirmed your government's decisions, but made several recommendations to ensure that our schools continue to meet students' needs.

He recommended that an additional \$1.8 billion be invested over a three-year period. Within 24 hours of receiving the report, your government took action and has committed to funding that exceeds his recommendations.

As Dr. Rozanski himself said: "Within four months, the government has taken seriously the recommendations and moved to implement more than \$1.8 billion in funding over three years."

No matter where they live in Ontario, parents want their children to have access to the opportunities a great education provides. That's why, as recommended by Dr. Rozanski, your government will help its education partners to find ways to strengthen schools in rural and northern communities.

Your government will continue to follow Dr. Rozanski's recommendations, knowing that the promise of Ontario is achievable only if each and every young person is given the opportunity of an excellent education.

Eight years ago, your government set out to make that promise a reality.

Today, the new curriculum is firmly established in every grade of our school system. This June, the first students to study under the new curriculum will graduate from Ontario's high schools. Five years of provincial and international tests are available to clearly show our students' progress.

Your government's education reforms are not only comprehensive — the evidence shows they have been successful.



However, your government will continue to consult with parents, teachers and students on the best ways to continue encouraging excellence.

Sabrina Joseph of Hamilton wrote to your government to say: “Get the students involved in everything! Give us a voice ... we are the future, help us plan it and make it a good one!”

Your government will continue to help each student prepare for challenges and opportunities and give them the tools they need to make their voices heard.

That’s why it requires students to meet rigorous literacy standards to receive a high school diploma. To help students thrive, your government will provide the remedial help some need to make the grade.

Your government will provide tools and resources to ensure phonics are available to all schools and encourage higher achievement in math by offering elementary school teachers scholarships to become math specialists.

It will allow athletes, musicians, artists and tradespeople to act as expert instructors or volunteers.

Your government will allow parents more choice to enrol their children in any available school within their board. Schools will still give first placement priority to students who live nearby.

To support parental choice, your government will introduce legislation to continue implementing the Equity in Education Tax Credit.

It is your government’s priority to put kids first by ensuring that all students have consistent access to the education they deserve.

In the past, many Ontario students competed only with each other for jobs. But today, they’re competing with students worldwide. That’s why we must teach our students the skills they need to compete globally.

Your government has heard from students and parents who are worried that qualified students might be turned away from colleges and universities because Grade 13 has been eliminated.



Let there be no doubt that every willing and qualified student will find a space in a post-secondary institution so they can find a rewarding career and go on to fulfil their dreams of a home and a family.

Your government has made that commitment.

Your government will keep that commitment.

It has already made significant investments in our post-secondary institutions to accommodate the increased enrolment for the upcoming school year. Along with its partners, your government is investing \$2.6 billion to create more than 135,000 new post-secondary student places — the largest capital investment in Ontario universities and colleges since the 1960s and the equivalent of almost nine McMaster Universities or nearly 11 Sheridan Colleges. It has also provided stability to our colleges and universities through multi-year operating funding and is providing an increase of 21 per cent by 2005-06 over last year's funding.

Your government will take further measures to prepare students for a bright future by increasing its annual investment in colleges and universities and demanding better accountability for results.

It will promote e-learning, so that students anywhere in Ontario can still receive the benefit of a quality education.

To help students with learning disabilities, your government will continue to support the work of the Learning Opportunities Task Force under the direction of Dr. Bette Stephenson. Because of the task force's work, learning-disabled students in each and every Ontario college and university have access to the help they need.

This is a time of unprecedented opportunity and a crucial moment for many industries that need skilled workers. Your government is committed to encouraging young people to seek rewarding and exciting careers in the skilled trades.

Your government will also encourage skilled tradespeople to play an even greater role in mentoring and teaching apprentices. This builds on the proposals made in the 2003 Budget. Your government will also encourage skilled, internationally trained workers to settle in Ontario and build new lives here.

These investments and improvements will help ensure that our students remain among the best trained and educated in the world. Not only will this help them achieve long-term success, it will help Ontario's economy continue to grow.



MAKING GOVERNMENT WORK BETTER

A strong economy requires that governments invest tax dollars wisely in priorities such as health care, education and infrastructure. School boards, hospitals, municipalities, colleges and universities have all said they could plan more effectively if they had multi-year base funding.

Your government is committed to delivering stable base funding on which its partners can depend. In return, taxpayers can expect to see better results and greater accountability in those sectors.

Your government also believes institutions that have the power to make decisions on your behalf must demonstrate fiscal responsibility.

Having taken measures to strengthen public sector accountability and transparency, your government believes that members who pay to keep organizations running should also know how their money is being spent. That's why your government will take steps to require unions to operate on principles of democracy, transparency and accountability.

To ensure that high-quality, effective services are delivered and that funding is used for its intended purpose, your government will introduce legislation to provide Quality Auditors for health, education and municipal services.

Fiscal responsibility requires that everything government does, it does efficiently, while offering citizens the best service at the best price. Your government will continue to find internal savings and enshrine the practice of zero-based budgeting.

Over the past several years, your government has begun improving public services. While the Ontario Public Service has been reduced by 23 per cent, it has won international awards that recognize its creative and innovative approach to public service. Businesses can now be registered in 20 minutes rather than six weeks. Automatic ServiceOntario kiosks in local malls allow citizens to renew vehicle licence plate stickers in a matter of minutes. But there is more to do.

Because Ontarians lead busy, active lives, your government will provide more services online, expand hours at service counters and increase the number of government kiosks.

All of these measures are designed to make Ontario's government and broader public sector more accountable to those it serves — Ontario's citizens. Because our



democracy is a work-in-progress, your government remains committed to finding new ways to improve and modernize our democratic institutions. The consultation process that resulted in this Throne Speech is one example of that.

To encourage direct democracy, this session your government will act on recommendations of the Standing Committee of the Legislative Assembly, encouraging free votes on private member's bills, and proposing to double the amount of time devoted to private members and allow private members to co-sponsor bills. It will also increase the opportunity for citizen-led initiatives such as petition filing over the Internet. It will also hold provincial-regional Cabinet meetings.

YOUR COMMUNITY — SAFE AND STRONG

Your government is taking all possible measures to ensure Ontarians' safety and security, protect the province's economy and ensure the free flow of traffic and goods across our borders. That's why your government will continue to promote the development of a North American security perimeter.

Special teams have been established to combat organized crime. The government has provided funding to hire more than 1,000 new police officers and hired 165 probation and parole officers. Your government is committed to funding even more.

The OPP has a long-standing tradition of helping countries in need, such as Kosovo and Sierra Leone. Our American friends have requested assistance in Iraq, and your government will work with the OPP to respond to this request.

Here at home, your government wants criminals to know that crime does not pay.

Ontarians deserve nothing less.

Your government believes that children, victims and other vulnerable people deserve special protection under the law. Those who would seek to harm the innocent deserve the strongest possible punishment.

That's why your government will fight child abuse, including increasing the front-line resources dedicated to fighting child pornography. It will also provide additional resources to rescue children from sexual exploitation, strengthen its high-



risk offender strategy and try child exploitation cases in special courts as developed with the judiciary.

That's also why your government will support crime victims and fight crime by implementing call-monitoring and call-blocking services in provincial jails to prevent inmates from harassing victims or their families. It will expand community-based victims' services. It has strengthened the voice of victims through legislation that gives them the right to speak at parole hearings.

To better protect citizens and police, it will develop a package of reforms designed to effectively fight gun-related crimes.

To ensure that drunk and dangerous drivers are kept off our roads, your government will develop even stiffer penalties for drunk driving. It will introduce legislation that would impose lifetime licence suspension upon a second drunk driving conviction and direct vehicle seizure in appropriate cases.

Your government will also introduce a "lemon law" to protect those who purchase consumer goods from having to pay for costly, hidden defects. It will increase access to small claims courts to allow more citizens to have their concerns and complaints heard.

However, strong communities are not held together merely by the force of law, but by everyday relationships between people.

Many Ontarians enjoy participating in artistic and cultural activities. Ontario's talented artistic community not only enriches us culturally, but helps to build strong communities. That's why your government will extend its highly successful Arts Endowment Fund. It will also introduce a new initiative through the Ontario Arts Council to support new business growth and training in the arts.

ONTARIO — GROWING BEAUTIFULLY

Ontarians deserve leadership that considers the needs of citizens today, tomorrow and of generations into the future. They expect their leaders to not only understand the promise of Ontario, but to have a comprehensive plan for seeing that promise fulfilled.



Your government's Smart Growth plan marks the first time in decades that an Ontario government has put forward a comprehensive vision with the power to shape the lives of citizens 10, 20 and 30 years from now.

Smart Growth will encourage orderly, planned development, while protecting our natural environment and farmland. It will unlock gridlock, give people housing choices within walking distance of green spaces and ensure that Ontario has the cleanest air and water in the world.

Your government's five Smart Growth panels are made up of community leaders with expertise in a variety of areas ranging from the municipal sector, the environment, the development industry, transportation and the education community.

Your government has already received feedback from one of its panels and thanks the panel members for their vision and dedication, and will be working with panel leaders and citizens to carry out their vision of orderly local development. In the coming weeks, your government will announce the steps it will take to strengthen planning, transit, transportation and environmental protection.

Your government understands prosperity doesn't happen by chance. Creating a strong economy, promoting a healthy environment and building strong communities require careful planning and smart investment.

Our highways are critical to our province's well-being. Keeping traffic moving smoothly and effectively is also important to workers and their families.

That's why your government will improve our transportation system — both public transit and highways — to help strengthen the economy and build stronger communities. Since 1995, your government has invested more than \$3.6 billion in public transit and \$7.5 billion in highways. While it continues to make record investments in public transit, your government encourages its federal counterparts to become full partners in Ontario's transit investment plan.

Your government is also preparing for the future by investing in municipal infrastructure. Over the next five years, it will contribute more than \$1.6 billion to help build the infrastructure rural communities need to support a growing economy.

Your government is committed to working with municipal governments to meet tough new standards for drinking-water safety. It is committed to ensuring Ontario has the toughest standards in the world for safe, clean drinking water, that those



standards are enforced and that all of Commissioner O'Connor's recommendations are implemented.

Your government recognizes the local challenges faced by some municipalities. It will work with them and the federal government to help municipalities meet their funding needs, guided by the principle of accountability and responsibility to taxpayers.

To help encourage development and growth in the north, your government has invested almost \$500 million since 1996 in over 1,400 Northern Ontario Heritage Fund projects. These projects were also supported by nearly \$1.2 billion from municipal and private sector partners and will generate an estimated 17,750 new jobs.

Your government is committed to supporting scientific and technological research and innovation. Since the 1997 Budget, your government has announced nearly \$4.2 billion in investments in science and technology, which are expected to leverage another \$5.2 billion from other partners for a total investment of over \$9.4 billion. By investing in research and development today, we can ensure that our young people enjoy a promising future, no matter where they live in Ontario.

Your government is committed to the creation of tax-incentive zones that would encourage both large and small businesses to invest, relocate or expand in rural and northern communities. This will create economic growth and give young people the opportunity to remain in the communities where they grew up.

To help reduce infrastructure-financing costs for municipalities, your government has developed municipal opportunity bonds. It will provide a \$1 billion capital injection to help kick-start the Ontario Opportunity Bonds program.

These bonds support your government's Smart Growth strategy for building a strong economy, vibrant communities and a clean, healthy environment. They will allow municipalities to borrow money at 50 per cent below market interest rates, reducing the cost of municipal debt.

To keep Ontario beautiful and restore pride, your government will ensure provincial highways are maintained through regular grass cutting and a program to reduce litter. To better show this pride, it will beautify entry points into the province.

Your government will continue to protect Ontario's natural heritage through Ontario's Living Legacy program. It will introduce legislation to protect the



Kawartha Highlands Signature Site and work to protect other sites such as the Lake Nipigon basin.

To protect valuable and unique natural features, promote tourism and preserve Ontario's natural heritage for future generations, your government will create new tourism opportunities through the Great Lakes Heritage Coast. It will also help create the Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area, the largest freshwater reserve in the world.

Your government believes that the promise of Ontario is reflected not only in what we are able to build, but also in what we choose to preserve.

CONCLUSION

Your government began its innovative Throne Speech consultation process with a simple goal in mind: to let the citizens of this great province guide its plans and priorities for the years ahead.

Over 10,000 Ontarians participated in that process, answering your government's invitation online, by fax, by mail and in person.

Your government has been guided by Ontarians. While it remains committed to making the tough decisions necessary to keep Ontario strong, it will also continue to follow the very simple, four-step formula that has guided all of its decisions.

It will ask for citizens' input.

They will answer.

It will listen.

It will take action.

Your government believes this approach is the heart of democracy and the soul of leadership.

Only by working together can we realize the benefits of our strong economy, identify and invest in the priorities that matter and realize the promise of Ontario.



Ontarians have always known about that promise. They have seen it in our province's boundless natural resources. In its proud and productive industries. In its strong social fabric.

Most of all, however, they have seen the promise of Ontario in each other.

In our children, whose lives will be shaped by strong schools, sheltered by safe neighbourhoods and surrounded by opportunity.

They have seen it in new immigrants to Ontario, who will find in this land of promise the security and bright future they seek.

In our seniors, whose experiences, sacrifices and wisdom guide us, our children and all the generations yet to come.

We have worked too hard and come too far to turn away from that promise now.

The promise of Ontario is ours. It guides your government as it makes its decisions. It guides the people of this province as they build a better and brighter future for all.

May God continue to bless Ontario and Canada.

May God guide all in public office, that they may use power wisely and well.

God save the Queen.