

Speech from the Throne

OPEN ONTARIO PLAN



Address of

The Honourable David C. Onley
Lieutenant Governor of Ontario

on the opening of the Second Session of the
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Mr. Speaker, Members of the Legislative Assembly, people of Ontario.

Since the global recession struck, things have been difficult for many Ontario families.

In the manufacturing sector, the last two years have been particularly hard.

Many of us know someone who has lost a job.

Perhaps even in our own families.

Some say the worst has passed and the recession is ending.

Yet the damage remains.

Companies have downsized, some have moved, some have closed their doors for good — not just here in Ontario, but in neighbouring states and provinces, and places all around the world.

No place has escaped the Great Recession unscathed.

That is why your government is responding to the extraordinary challenge of the global recession with two extraordinary measures.

First: it plans to invest over \$32 billion in roads, bridges, public transit and energy retrofits for our schools.

This is creating and sustaining over 300,000 jobs and puts money into the hands of families, where it is needed — and it is stimulating our economy while we emerge from the recession.

Second: your government is supporting Ontarians in their choice to go back to school so they can get a good job — not just any job.

Ontario's Second Career Program is a first for Canada because it supports up to two years of long-term training.

For people like Jason Boylan — one of the first participants in the program — Second Career has made a real, positive difference.



When he was laid off from an auto parts manufacturing job, he enrolled in Culinary Management at Fleming College.

Jason graduates in a few weeks and has several good job offers on the table.

Your government congratulates him — and over 26,000 other Ontarians who have entered the program.

The Open Ontario Plan

Helping people and communities hurt by the recession is an important responsibility your government takes seriously.

But it is also laying a new foundation for growth.

Because — even in tough times — Ontarians have always looked to their future.

Where others see a world that threatens, Ontarians see opportunity that beckons.

We carved our province out of a harsh northern land.

Our people endured, and they thrived.

They began to mine the land, and harvest the forests.

Our people built farms and schools and towns and cities.

We gave the world great artists, poets and novelists.

We invented medicines that have saved millions of lives.

We laid down our lives on the battlefields of history's bloodiest wars.

We built the cars, trains and planes that moved the world into the 20th century.

We built an economy supporting a quality of life for our families that is the envy of the world.



And as we begin the second decade of the 21st century — as our world faces unprecedented economic, environmental and social challenges — one thing remains clear.

The world needs Ontario.

The world needs what we have to offer.

It needs our schools — to educate the best and brightest citizens of the world who will go on to solve the problems of our world.

It needs our innovators — who have invented tools such as the Blackberry that keep our world connected.

It needs our skilled workers — who continue to build the advanced products the world needs.

It needs our diversity — because nowhere else do more people come together from more places to live so well, together.

It needs our compassion — because not only do we lift one another up through our health care system and our public services, but when disaster strikes as it did in Haiti and Chile, Ontarians open their hearts to the world.

And when duty calls — as it has in Afghanistan — our people are there to serve. And when our people return from service, we honour them.

Ontarians have always been citizens of Canada and citizens of the world.

At the start of the 20th century, Ontario was there for the transition from buggy whip to the automobile, helping our country compete and our world move faster.

At the start of the 21st century, Ontario will be there for the transition to a new, clean economy, to help our nation and our world move more efficiently.

We will continue to build the world's cars — but they will be the more efficient cars the world needs.

We will continue to have a strong manufacturing sector — but increasingly, it will be advanced manufacturing that builds on the skills and education of our people.



Yes, our world has changed.

But one thing remains.

Our world needs Ontario — more than ever.

The world presents us with more opportunity than ever.

And we need to be ready.

The next five years will be decisive for Ontario.

That's why your government is launching a new, five-year Open Ontario Plan.

Because growing our economy, and growing stronger, requires that Ontario be open to change, open to opportunities, open to our new world.

The Open Ontario Plan will create an Ontario even more open to new ideas, new people, new investment — not only to replace old jobs that have gone — but to create the new jobs that are coming.

Not only to build the things that made us great in the last century — but to build the things that will make us great in this one.

Your government is launching that plan today.

A plan for our economy

The Open Ontario Plan begins with creating a climate where business can thrive, create jobs and build innovative new products to sell to the world.

Creating that climate has begun through a package of tax reforms that modernize our tax system to make us more competitive and create more jobs.

Income taxes for Ontarians were cut on January 1.

Your government is also cutting corporate income taxes and eliminating the capital tax this year.



And in lockstep with the federal government, Ontario is introducing a harmonized sales tax.

Independent economists say these changes will create nearly 600,000 more Ontario jobs over the next 10 years — including over 100,000 in manufacturing alone.

So these improvements to the tax system benefit all Ontarians.

They mean that Ontario businesses — from factories to small businesses — will have more money to invest in their future. And more time and resources to focus on their business instead of dealing with red tape.

This will allow them to keep or hire more people and create a workforce that can take on the world.

Another part of your government's Open Ontario Plan that is already underway is the Green Energy Act.

It provides a stable price for clean energy producers so they will invest here, and create up to 50,000 Ontario jobs in new, clean industries that did not exist a few years ago.

It is already paying dividends.

In January, Samsung announced the biggest investment of its kind in the world: \$7 billion to create 2,500 megawatts of clean power and some 16,000 Ontario jobs.

Your government will soon welcome hundreds of new, clean energy investments in Ontario through its feed-in tariff program — which is attracting the interest of the world's investors and entrepreneurs.

Those projects will need solar panels and wind turbines.

Ontarians will build them.

And we will sell them all over North America.

Your government is also doing its part to streamline services for business through its Open for Business strategy.



Those are just some of the steps your government is taking to create an Ontario that is more open to new investment, new Ontario jobs, and new industries.

Today, it takes another step.

As part of its Open Ontario Plan, your government will introduce legislation that will build on Ontario's expertise in clean-water technology.

The Water Opportunities Act would lay the foundation for new Ontario jobs and make our province the North American leader in the development and sale of new technologies and services for water conservation and treatment.

The Conference Board of Canada estimates the global market for water technology at more than \$400 billion US per year — and doubling every five to six years.

In the next 20 years, worldwide demand for water is expected to be 40 per cent greater than current supply — a crisis in the making if the world does not act.

Already, Ontario is beginning to provide solutions.

From water conservation to nanotechnology, Ontario companies are leading the way — and employing 22,000 people in good, high-paying Ontario jobs selling water technology around the world.

Your government will work with our colleges, universities and entrepreneurs to create even more Ontario jobs and attract even more clean-water expertise and investment to our province.

It will strengthen protections for our water — including the Great Lakes.

It will build on our strong foundation of water expertise — and make our province the clean water capital of North America.

Your government will also support growth and expansion in our agrifood sector by working through Ontario's Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs to create new opportunities to buy local food, and open up new markets outside the province — because the world needs the good things that grow in Ontario.

Your government also knows that northern Ontarians face particular challenges — and that the global recession has had a deep impact in northern communities.



Ontario

Your government will ensure the North benefits from its Open Ontario Plan.

In 2008, northern Ontario became home to our first diamond mine.

Your government will build on that success — particularly in the region known as the Ring of Fire.

It is said to contain one of the largest chromite deposits in the world — a key ingredient in stainless steel.

There is no substitute for chromite. There is no North American producer of chromite.

It's the most promising mining opportunity in Canada in a century.

Your government is fully committed to working with northerners, Aboriginal communities and mining partners to fully realize the Ring of Fire's potential.

Together, we will create Ontario jobs and support northern families as we continue to protect 50 per cent of the northern Boreal Forest.

As well, your government will continue to promote economic opportunity and consultation with Aboriginal communities as part of an improved and productive relationship that has been forged with Aboriginal peoples.

Your government also understands that the bedrock of our province's economy includes one of the strongest financial services industries in the world.

Canada's banks — based here in Ontario — are widely recognized as the soundest in the world.

Toronto is now North America's third largest financial centre and home to 350,000 jobs. Ontario-wide, the sector supports 625,000 jobs.

So your government is working with the Financial Services Leadership Council to support the industry and create a strategy to make Toronto one of the world's elite financial centres.

And your government applauds the federal government's efforts to create a national securities regulator. It should be located in Toronto.



Your government will continue to open up new economic opportunities for all Ontarians through the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, which will make Ontario accessible by 2025.

Your government is grateful for the work of Ontario's 46,000 not-for-profit organizations that are the unsung heroes of Ontario's economy.

Nearly five million Ontarians volunteer their services in their communities.

Some are helping your government reach its goal of reducing poverty rates by 25 per cent in five years.

Some are coaching our young people — like Sandy Cooper-Ryder of London. For 30 years she's been inspiring young people to reach higher, dig deeper and go further — not just on the track, but in all areas of their lives.

Sandy is one of the many dedicated coaches training Ontario's next generation of gifted young athletes, some of whom will compete in the 2015 Pan American games.

On this International Women's Day, your government particularly recognizes dedicated women like Sandy — together with all the volunteers who are making a real difference.

Open Ontario will develop new ways to strengthen the not-for-profit sector — recognizing that in a time of more limited resources, we all need to work together to move our province forward.

To ensure that Ontario's resources are always devoted to our highest priorities, your government has initiated a review of its business enterprises.

If the review concludes that change in Ontario's assets is in the public interest, your government will use the proceeds to better support Ontarians' highest priorities in a global economy — including the strongest possible commitment to the skills and education of our people.

A plan for education

Ontario is already home to the builders, dreamers and innovators of the future.



Right now, they are boys and girls sitting in classrooms across our province.

Tomorrow, they will be men and women, ready to take on the world.

That's why your government has made education its highest priority.

It has reduced class sizes, raised test scores, increased the graduation rate, and created thousands of new spaces in colleges, universities and apprenticeships.

Ontarians are some of the most highly skilled and educated workers in the world.

And that gives us a competitive edge.

It is an edge we must sharpen even further.

That's why, starting this fall, full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds will begin at schools across our province.

This is the first program of its kind in North America.

It's part of a plan to help more children get a strong start in school — so they can go on to college, university or training programs — and find a great job.

It will help lift more children out of poverty.

It will help busy parents balance their work and their family lives.

It will build a stronger economy for Ontario.

Because to put it simply — the places with the strongest schools, today, will have the strongest economies tomorrow.

Ontario has one of the highest rates of postsecondary education in the world at 62 per cent. Since 2003, your government has added 180,000 students to our colleges, universities and apprenticeships.

But we need to reach even higher, knowing that in the new world, 70 per cent of all new jobs will require postsecondary education.



So your government's Open Ontario Plan will raise Ontario's postsecondary rate to 70 per cent.

Your government's plan begins with increasing spaces in colleges and universities for 20,000 students this year.

That's the equivalent of a whole new University of Guelph.

Under your government's Open Ontario Plan, every qualified Ontarian who wants to go to college or university will find a place.

Right now, 120,000 Ontario apprentices are learning a trade.

Your government recently established an Ontario College of Trades to modernize Ontario's apprenticeship and skilled trades system.

Open Ontario will continue to stand behind the talented and skilled tradespeople who have made our province strong, while enhancing workers' safety.

Your government will work with all its partners in education, training and business to develop a new, five-year plan to improve the quality of Ontario's postsecondary education system.

Your government will create the new Ontario Online Institute, bringing the best professors in the top programs at Ontario universities to the homes of those who want to pursue this new option for higher learning.

Your government's Open Ontario Plan will also open our colleges and universities to the world.

Millions of families around the globe want what Ontarians have — a quality postsecondary education that leads to a good job and a secure future.

The world needs Ontario's schools.

So your government will aggressively promote Ontario postsecondary institutions abroad, and increase international enrolment by 50 per cent while maintaining spaces for Ontario students.

Their contributions will strengthen our schools and create more Ontario jobs.



Together, we will make Ontario a classroom for the world.

A plan for health care

In Ontario, we care for our people.

In Ontario, no one who gets sick is turned away.

In Ontario, quality health care is one more thing families don't have to worry about, and one more advantage we have over the competition.

Your government has strengthened that advantage.

In the last six years, 900,000 more Ontarians got access to a family doctor.

More international doctors got their licence to practise here.

The first nurse practitioner-led clinics in North America are opening their doors.

Because Ontarians believe in lifting one another up, and caring for one another — we have shorter wait times for cancer surgeries.

We have faster care at emergency rooms and improved and expanded hospitals.

Your government has acted because Ontarians demand, expect and deserve public health care that is second to none.

Your government remains focused on reducing emergency wait times, and achieving results in diabetes and e-health in communities across Ontario.

In the past, the question facing Ontarians was: “will health care be there for me and my children?”

Ontarians have answered that question with a resounding: yes.

Together, we are absolutely committed to a strong public health care system.

But today we face new challenges that require a new plan.



Just 20 years ago, 32 cents of every dollar spent on government programs were spent on health care.

Today, it is 46 cents.

In 12 years, it could be 70 cents.

So, the question now facing Ontarians is: “how do we fund the best health care without crowding out all the other priorities we share — like investing in our schools, helping our vulnerable, protecting our environment, and investing in infrastructure and economic development?”

That is a discussion that will happen, sooner or later, in every Canadian province and territory.

Your government believes Ontario needs to lead that national dialogue, and will engage Ontarians directly in this important conversation.

Ontario will lead by pursuing a path of constant reform to ensure that the health system — and all our vital public services — are there for our children and grandchildren.

Your government will begin this process by keeping drugs affordable to keep Ontarians healthy, and reinvest the savings in health care.

It will introduce legislation to make health care providers and executives accountable for improving patient care.

Your government will build on the success of the wait time reduction strategy by ensuring that — for more and more services — money will follow the patient. Patients will have greater choice about where they can access the best quality treatment.

Your government will create an independent, expert advisory body to provide recommendations on clinical practice guidelines. It will ensure that future investments get results and improve patient health.

Your government will review the Public Hospitals Act and introduce legislation to create a hospital system that taps into the expertise of community partners and all health care professionals.



To ensure our health services are meeting the needs of all citizens, Ontario's francophone community will have better input into the planning of French-language health services in their communities.

Your government will work with the public and private sectors to develop a strategy to promote better health for our children.

Ontario's health system not only provides world class care for patients — but develops leading-edge treatments and research. Open Ontario will export that expertise to the world while providing quality care at home.

A plan for a stronger Ontario

Your government knows that if our province wants to maintain strong public services and attract investment, the world needs Ontario to be on a solid financial footing.

That's why, in its next budget, your government will lay out a plan to return the budget to balance.

Your government will not put economic growth at risk by cutting too much, too soon.

Nor will it proceed with spending as if there is no deficit.

So it will continue to make responsible choices, and it is proceeding with its plan to reduce its own size by five per cent.

Your government knows that Ontarians are proud Canadians.

We are proud to work hard and do our part to strengthen our country.

Your government has worked with the federal government to ensure that all Canadians receive fair treatment.

And your government wants to continue that positive and productive relationship.

Ontarians welcome the federal government's commitment to not reduce transfer payments to Ontario as it balances the federal budget.



Your government calls on the federal government to live up to its obligations in areas where it has come up short, such as childcare and immigration.

Your government also calls on its federal partner to show leadership on climate change, to help our businesses get ahead of the changes that are coming to the North American market and help create jobs for Ontarians.

Our people are active participants in the fight against climate change.

We are closing down our coal plants and building a cleaner economy.

We are already building the clean technologies the rest of the world needs.

Your government asks that our partner in Ottawa recognize and fund Ontario's green revolution — which is already underway — just as it is funding carbon-sequestration research in other provinces.

An Open Ontario

Without a doubt, our world has changed.

The challenges facing Ontarians in that new world are unprecedented.

But Ontario families have every right to be hopeful about their future.

Because our world needs Ontario.

It needs our people to rise to the challenges of our time — just as past generations rose to the challenges of their time.

The world needs Ontario to lead the way — not only to provide the goods and services the global economy demands, but to provide the example of a good, strong, compassionate society that our world needs.

Here in Ontario, we have built a modern miracle.

A society where our children get a great education.

Where our sick and our seniors are cared for.



Where our people speak every language, practise every religion, and come from every place on earth to live together in peace and prosperity.

Where immigration isn't just a word, but our lifeblood.

Our world needs Ontario to succeed.

And we will, just as we always have.

It begins with a new, five-year plan for a more Open Ontario.

Because we know that when we invest in each other's health care and education, we are investing in our shared future.

We know that the new, clean-technology products and services we will develop and sell will not only create good, Ontario jobs for our families, but a cleaner and better planet for all.

That's the goal of Open Ontario.

Because right now, in an Ontario classroom, there is a young person who will be our next Banting or Bondar.

A young person who will improve lives — or save them — all around the world.

The world needs that young Ontarian to succeed.

And Ontarians need to ensure that child — and every child — has every opportunity to succeed.

So we can keep building what the world needs.

So we can keep building a good and compassionate society.

Together, let us seize the opportunities that await all of us in a new world that beckons us.

For our families.

For our children.



For our Ontario.

The greatest province in the best country in the world.