

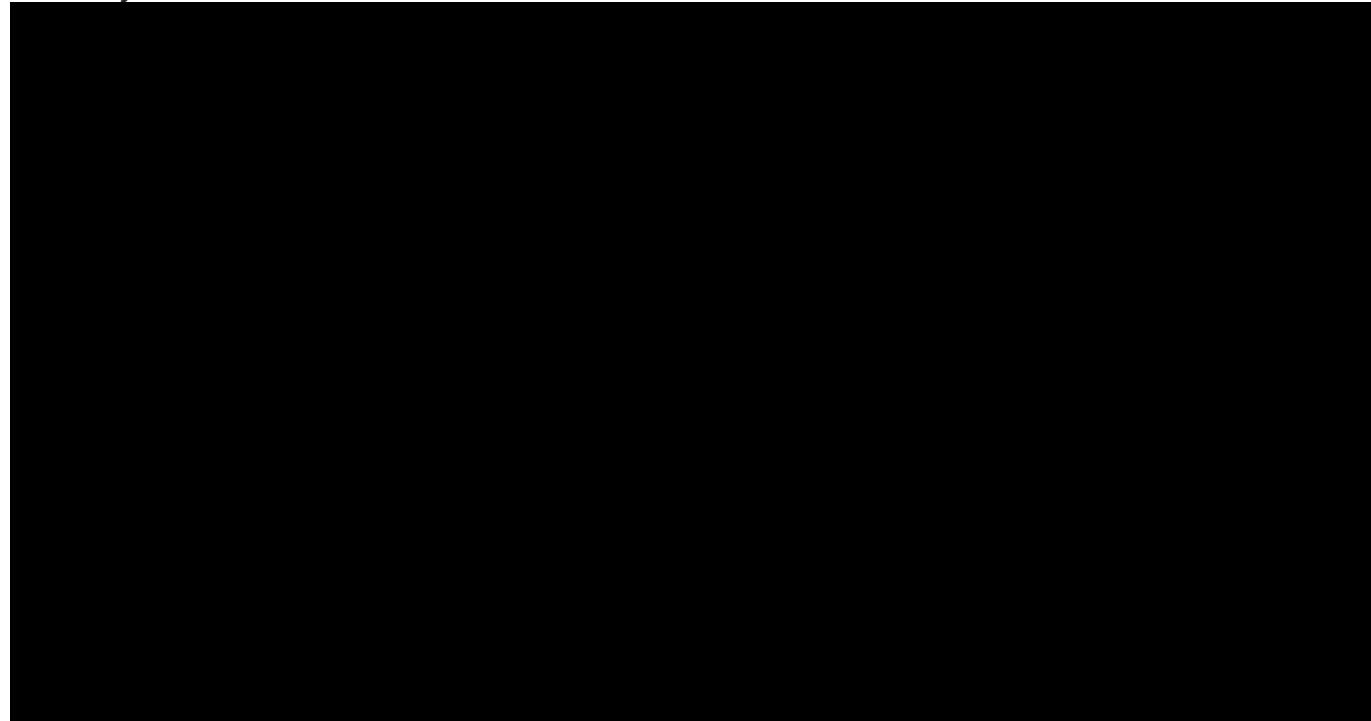


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The Way Forward



Mr. Speaker, members of the legislative assembly, men and women, young and old, across this great province of Ontario.

I would like to acknowledge that we are on the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the New Credit.

Today it is my privilege as Her Majesty's representative to deliver the first Speech from the Throne drafted by this new government, as we mark the beginning of the second session of the 40th Parliament of Ontario.

If you will allow me a moment of reflection, I would like to speak of another first, a man whom, sadly, we have lost since I last addressed this legislature.

The Honourable Lincoln Alexander was the first black member of Parliament, the first black cabinet minister, the first black lieutenant governor of Ontario.

But when he passed away last October, his granddaughters remembered him simply as a true human being with flaws and perfections.

He was born and raised in Toronto, his heart belonged to Hamilton, but he served on behalf of his entire province, and his nation.

He was not hemmed in by the prejudice of others, nor the expectations of his time. He demonstrated that every individual part of our being informs who we are but it does not define who we are.

And that if we believe in our own abilities, our potential has no limits.

As a man, he was more than the sum of his parts and now, as a memory, he is a symbol of the service we must endeavour to offer.

Your new government believes that Ontario is a place of endless possibilities.

Of flaws and perfections.

Where people have different backgrounds and different views, where they gaze upon different skylines, but share the same hopes.

Your new government sees a great province that brings together disparate elements and bonds them together as one.

And your new government believes the legislature should work the same way.

For the benefit of the entire province, your government intends to work with opposition parties, in a spirit of renewed cooperation, to get the people's business done.

It does not believe that we are irreparably divided.

Or that the challenges we face cannot be overcome.

Nor will it look at any one issue in isolation from another, because your new government believes that complex times require thoughtful, collaborative solutions.

And that we can only surmount each obstacle by acknowledging that they are all connected.

And that we are all connected.

So yes, your government will balance its books -- it will also challenge the people of Ontario to help the province innovate and grow.

And yes, your government will strive for economic prosperity -- it will also encourage a fair society, where all the people of Ontario have good jobs and strong communities.

And where each and every one of us is safe, and healthy and cared for.

Your government will create a better process to ensure that all its partners, including those within the public sector, are treated with respect.

But it will call upon these same partners to work with this new government so we can journey forward, boldly, as one.

Today, we turn a page in history, in some respects.

Another series of firsts: the first day of a reopened legislature, the first female premier.

We are not starting over, but we are dedicated anew.

A Steady Hand and a Bold Vision

The central objectives of your new government will be fiscal responsibility, economic growth and increased employment -- the bedrocks on which it will build.

It will ensure opportunity for all without letting anyone slip through the cracks.

And it will send a clear message that Ontario's finances are in steady hands, so that the confidence of all sectors can be raised.

Your new government will restrain program spending to reduce Ontario's debt-to-GDP ratio, while recommitting itself to eliminating the deficit by 2017-2018.

And after that, it will restrict overall spending increases to one per cent below GDP growth until the province's debt-to-GDP ratio returns to the pre-recession level of 27 per cent.

It will also introduce a balanced approach to balancing the budget so that all parties can work together to find savings without impacting the services on which people rely.

However, your new government understands that Ontario's true potential cannot be reached through austerity alone.

And so it will continue to implement recommendations found in the Drummond Report, including work to evaluate corporate tax compliance.

But it will also be driven by the quest for innovation and growth.

At the heart of this will be your new government's action on job creation, which will draw on the belief that an educated, skilled and diverse workforce is Ontario's greatest strength.

Your government looks to strengthen the earning potential of all men and women of this province - whether they live in cities or small towns, the north or the south - and enable everyone to have a good job and a secure paycheque.

It will empower its industries to expand and its individual citizens to excel.

Your government will coordinate its services with those of non-profit and private sectors so that recent graduates, new Canadians and the unemployed can find a practical path into the workforce.

To address the serious issue of youth unemployment, your government will join forces with high school educators, colleges, universities, training partners and employers to establish opportunities for young people to enhance their skills; find placements, internships and co-op programs; and gain valuable, real world experience.

Aboriginal communities must also have access to the tools and training they need to fully participate in economic development opportunities, including those related to our natural resources.

And so your government is working with Aboriginal communities to ensure that the benefits of resource development are shared and opportunities for education, training and employment are established.

Your government will ensure that all individuals can find their role in this economy.

And so it calls on the private sector to increase the number of people with disabilities in the Ontario workforce.

As a demonstration of its commitment to this goal, your government will shift the Accessibility Directorate from the Ministry of Community and Social Services to the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Because men and women with disabilities deserve a level playing field.

A renewed partnership with business, educational institutions, not-for-profits and labour will be at the heart of your government's plans to build a modern, competitive and dynamic economy.

And so your new government will work with the opposition and small business to explore an increase in the Employer Health Tax exemption threshold.

It will look to stimulate productivity across all sectors, from automotive and agriculture to film, music, and digital media; from small business to start-ups and social entrepreneurs.

And your government will continue to assert Ontario's pride of place in the realms of manufacturing, financial services, tourism, forestry and natural resource development.

But it will also support the exploration of new economic terrain.

It will work with financial institutions and government agencies to ensure that small- and medium-sized enterprises have access to the capital they need to expand.

And as a demonstration of that commitment, your government will contribute \$50 million to a new \$300-million venture capital fund in partnership with its federal counterparts and the private sector.

Your government will also capitalize on its trade corridors, expanding them and making them attractive to global markets.

It will work with members of our diverse population to open up new opportunities and expand the network of our possibilities.

It will help facilitate the smooth transfer of goods through important hubs like Windsor, across the Detroit River International Crossing, and it will lead trade missions to our valuable partners abroad.

Your government will visit our friends in India and China, but also in Southeast Asia, eastern Europe, the Middle East and South America.

It will ensure that every part of the province has dependable, affordable sources of energy.

And because conservation is the cheapest source of energy available, Ontario will continue to be a leader in smart-grid technology and energy conservation, and see the creation of new-economy jobs through the deployment of leading energy efficiency technologies in our homes and our businesses.

It will also continue its work to end coal-fired energy generation, the single largest climate change initiative currently underway in North America.

As your government moves forward, Ontario's labour force will be treated fairly and with respect.

It will sit down with its partners across all sectors to build a sustainable model for wage negotiation, respectful of both collective bargaining and a fair and transparent interest arbitration process, so that the brightness of our shared future is not clouded by the indisputable economic realities of our time.

It will prove once again that Ontario is a great place to work and live, but also to visit, to invest in, to believe in.

It will celebrate our hard work, our ingenuity, our diversity, our arts and culture, and protect the beauty of our natural environment.

And it calls upon its legislative partners to join with the government in the pursuit of a modern economy, a path to productivity, and good jobs right here in Ontario. Because the tools of progress must be forged in the fire of our collective will.

A New Sense of Community

Your government understands the importance of relationships in all their manifestations.

The relationship between us as citizens; but also the relationship between individual parts and the whole.

The ways in which our economy is supported by the roads we drive, and the services we continue to offer.

Your government understands that if Ontario is to prosper, then individual communities must prosper.

And that provinces must work together to advocate for their shared needs, and raise their voices as one to demand that a great nation must have the capacity to do great things.

Your government understands that infrastructure is the underpinning of our economy, and that if we continue to lag behind then we will never leap forward.

The people of this province are ready to have a serious conversation about the needs of their communities, whether those needs are better roads or stronger bridges, repaired underpasses or accelerated, integrated transit planning.

To build these things and facilitate Ontario's success, your government believes that smart infrastructure investment can no longer be mired in political rhetoric.

Just as the hard-working men and women of this province can no longer afford to waste their time stuck in traffic.

Or be isolated from one another, and the services they need, because their communities are remote, or their funding is unpredictable.

If we continue to argue about the tools this investment will require then we are deaf to the symphony of progress that echoes around us.

The new government is confident that the people of Ontario are willing to participate in a practical discussion of these costs if they can be guaranteed measurable results.

And those results will be found in the increase of our collective productivity, the reduction of our daily commute times and the reduced impact on our climate and natural environment.

But your government also realizes that these are not the hurdles of one city or one province, but a race against time for Canada as a whole.

Addressing them will require cooperation from all orders of government, and so your government will engage in conversation with its municipal and community partners.

And it will also reach out to its provincial and territorial colleagues to advocate for a

national strategy on infrastructure and transit.
It will address the need for improvements to rural roads and bridges, suburban transit, and a solution to the gridlock that threatens to cripple the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area.
It will address the special transportation needs of Ontario's North and endeavour to improve vital access to the Ring of Fire, and improve the flow of people and goods along our trade corridors to the United States.
Because Ontario cannot evolve if it cannot move.
Your government intends to work with municipalities on other issues, too.
Because communities must be involved and connected to one another.
They must have a voice in their future and a say in their integrated, regional development.
So that local populations are involved from the beginning if there is going to be a gas plant or a casino or a wind plant or a quarry in their hometown.
Because our economy can benefit from these things, but only if we have willing hosts.
Ontario communities must also remain safe.
Because every child in this province should be able to walk home without fear, and no parent should face an unthinkable loss.
And so your government will explore how to improve collaboration along the front lines of community safety, allowing police and prosecutors to build on successful best practices across the justice system.
When it comes to the different regions of this province, your new government will not address your issues in isolation because you are not isolated.
Your new government will work with municipal leaders in every region of this province.
Because our rural and northern residents are unique, and their voices will be heard.
But that same promise is made to young families in condos downtown, to retirees in Ontario's wine country, to the people of the north and the south and the east and the west.
Because your government knows that its citizens are not defined by their location alone.
Because we have autoworkers who live on rural roads, and we have local food advocates who cycle to work in the city.
We have authors and artists and actors in Timmins and men and women who love the outdoors but live in the growing city of London.
We are all extensions of the same landscape, part of the same province; and each citizen will inform its government's perspective and its actions.
Your government knows that Ontario comprises many parts, and is one part of the Canadian whole.
And that while we are all different, we share the same goals.

A Fair Society

To climb to great heights, your government believes that everyone must have the same firm footing.
If we help people now, we will help ourselves immeasurably in the future, because the services provided by your government allow people to work, and prosper and contribute.
Following the recommendations of Frances Lankin and Munir Sheikh, your new government will work to help the unemployed find a job.
And to ensure that the challenging path they must navigate to free themselves from social assistance is not made unduly difficult, your government will enable them to keep more of what they earn through their hard work.
These are people whom all parties hope to empower, and your government encourages the legislature to work together on their behalf.
Your government will also ensure that our citizens have a safe, secure and affordable place to live.

The day-to-day interests of people across Ontario must be addressed, and your government will strive to protect their privacy and their pocketbooks. It will help this province's nine million drivers by continuing to implement the recommendations of the Auto Insurance Anti-Fraud Task Force, protecting individuals against fraud and working to reduce insurance rates across Ontario. And it will look to strengthen the rights of Ontario's consumers when it comes to door-to-door sales, debt settlement services, real estate transactions and mobile and smartphone contracts. Because our marketplace must be fair, and the prices we pay transparent. The happiness and health of Ontario residents must be enshrined, and so your government will also continue to build the strongest and most innovative health care system in the world, so that the hospitals and research institutions in places like Thunder Bay and Toronto keep setting international standards and saving innumerable lives. Your government is committed to health promotion to combat smoking and obesity, and it believes strongly in patient-centred care and evidence-based health policy. Along with all parties in the legislature, it understands the pressing need to expand access to home care in Ontario. And so your government will continue to expand the support available to people in their homes, and to address the needs of men and women across Ontario currently waiting for the home care services they require. Your government will also continue to expand access to mental health services and support efforts to reduce stigma for men and women coping with mental illness. It will work with partners in all related sectors to coordinate the best response to these challenges because Ontario's minds and spirits must be healthy, too. It will also move forward with a Seniors Strategy to ensure that Ontario can best respond to the needs of its aging population. It will promote partnership between health care providers - from hospitals and long-term care homes, to community support services and front line medical providers through Community Health Links - so that the care of our loved ones and our most vulnerable citizens is constant and cohesive. To ensure the best treatment for our children, our parents, grandparents and our friends, your government believes the research community must be supported in its work. And it is therefore announcing renewed support for the Ontario Brain Institute through a funding partnership with the private sector. Every dollar your government contributes will leverage four additional dollars from its partners by 2018. A healthy community also requires strong doses of compassion and forethought. And so your government will continue to prioritize education and inclusion. It will keep building a comprehensive early learning and care system, including the successful extension of full-day kindergarten and child care. It will show its respect for teachers, support staff, principals and school boards. Because our young people will experience a world of which we can now only dream, and we must all work together to ensure they are equipped with the appropriate tools for their time. They must be literate in the languages of tomorrow; encouraged to pursue the paths of their choosing and prepared for the challenges ahead. We must teach them to work together and to believe in themselves. We must emphasize critical thinking, creativity, teamwork and an entrepreneurial spirit. We must enamour them to the possibilities of science, math and technology. We must help them feel safe and take their ideas and their input seriously. And so your government will create a permanent Premier's youth advisory council. It will continue to offer the 30 Per Cent Off Ontario Tuition Grant to help more people get a postsecondary education. And your government believes that First Nation, Metis and Inuit children must share

in every opportunity, too.
That we must close the gap with their peers so that they can live and learn and play as they like.
And we must all acknowledge that their proud heritage does not preclude their full participation.
Your government will work with Aboriginal communities, but the federal government must also live up to its important obligations in this regard.
Your government will ensure that attention and respect are extended to all.
It will ensure that Ontario's Francophone community is recognized and celebrated for its culture and its contributions.
And so your government will expand the availability of French postsecondary programs in central and southwestern Ontario.
Our community of new Canadians will be shown that where they were born will not limit what they can achieve.
Ontario is home to citizens who speak many languages; who have brought their culture, their training and their aspirations to this province.
Your government sees Ontario's diverse population as an asset to be exalted.
It is not just a mosaic but a valuable work of art, from which we can glean great knowledge.
The people of this province may speak different languages. They may be young or old, healthy or ailing, rich or poor.
But the parties of this legislature should have their trust, and they deserve our fairness and our support.

The Way Forward

Your government believes that if we can hope to serve Ontario, then we must act together, as one.
The people of Ontario expect this of all members of the legislative assembly.
It is what they want and it is what they deserve.
Members of provincial parliament must be conduits for their constituents, so this legislature can hear all the voices of this province and represent all of its diverse needs.
All parties and each member will be encouraged to contribute to this process, to make their insights known.
Your new government hopes that ideas will be put forward with optimism and purpose, and that voices will not be raised solely for the pursuit or retention of power.
Your government is committed to finding real, creative solutions to the issues we face.
To do this, it will direct its efforts across these aisles, within its ministries, and in partnership with other provinces.
When Ontario hosts the Council of the Federation in Niagara-on-the-Lake this summer, it will work with our provincial partners to expedite the return of principled transfer arrangements with the federal government.
Closer to home, your government expects the talent and tenacity of its public servants to help propel this province to greatness.
It will not over-promise, nor will it be bowed into submission.
It will be respectful and direct, honest and decisive.
Your government, and your cabinet ministers, will be accountable to all the people of Ontario, and work to prevent mistakes before they occur.
And it will work with all parties in the legislature to review the decisions to relocate energy infrastructure in this province.
Your new government is committed to getting real work done on behalf of all the people of Ontario, and it calls upon members of the legislature to come together in support of that noble goal.
There are so many opportunities for progress, for all parties to join together.
There is common ground that transcends partisan politics, and it is found in the

desire to make Ontario's economy stronger; to improve its transportation networks and give all the people of this province the same opportunities, purpose and pride. Your government believes all things are possible. Your government will not be hemmed in by expectations. It will explore the endless geography of our shared potential. Because we are one province, and together we can be more than the sum of our parts. Your government will tackle its flaws and celebrate the perfections of its people. Your government will bring together disparate elements and bond them together as one. Both within these hallowed halls and across this glorious province. Because we are people with different backgrounds and different views, we gaze upon different skylines but we all share the same hopes. And your government will endeavour to serve for the benefit of all. Thank you. Merci. Meegwetch.

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