

Transcript: Premier Wynne's Remarks At Bracebridge - May 26, 2017

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PREMIER WYNNE'S REMARKS AT BRACEBRIDGE

Date: May 26, 2017
Length: 11:57 minutes
Speaker(s): Premier Kathleen Wynne

UNIDENTIFIED: Kathleen Wynne, Premier of Ontario. Welcome.

PREMIER KATHLEEN WYNNE: Thank you. Thank you very much. Bonjour, boozhoo aanii everyone. It's wonderful to be here in Bracebridge right beside Huntsville. It's awesome. And I obviously I am very pleased to be here to celebrate this great construction. It's a beautiful bridge, but I'm also happy to be back in Muskoka. It's one of the most beautiful places in the world, you all know that, and it's a pleasure to be here. My – Bracebridge has a particularly warm spot in my heart because as a teenager my coach Bonnie Parkhill is from Bracebridge and I'm actually going to go and see her after this. And she was someone who changed my life, as you know a good coach can. And so I always thought of Bracebridge as Bonnie's home. So it's great to be here. Mayor Smith, thank you for your support and to all of the municipal officials, thank you. Thank you for working with us. It is complicated, the relationship between the province and municipalities, but it is fundamental and I believe that when we work together we can we can do great things for our constituents who are the same people. So it's great to be here. And I want to I want to begin as I do by acknowledging that long – since long before we began meeting here this land was a gathering place for many indigenous people and just to show respect to First Nation and Métis people who for countless generations have helped and continue to shape Ontario.

So all week I've been spending time in communities across northeastern Ontario I made it. We started out in Sudbury on Tuesday and yesterday we were in Moose Factory and Moosonee, and last night in Timmins, the day before in Timmins. So it's been great now to come here to the land in between right, which is what Muskoka is, and it's you really are – you're a bridge not just here but the bridge between our provinces north and south, and so you understand the unique challenges and opportunities that exist in every community and you can see north and you can see south and you get that. And we have an ongoing conversation between the provincial government and your communities and being here to continue that conversation is really important because it allows me to once again have an opportunity to firsthand hear about the challenges that you're facing and what's important to the families that you represent, and that ensures that I have the – I have a perspective on different parts of the province. A young First Nations, a young Cree kid, asked me yesterday, "Why are you doing this? Why are you here? What are you here to do? And I said, "You know, it's my job as Premier to talk to as many people as I can every day about what's going on in this province because that's what helps inform the decisions that we make at Queen's Park." So that's why I'm here. You know it's our job to make sure that everyone in this province has the opportunity to meet their full potential. And I've always believed that the only reason government exists is to do good things, is to do the things that we can't do alone. We come together and we do things together that we could never do on our own.

So when we when we balanced our budget this spring, and it's the first time that the budget's been balanced in Ontario for almost a decade, we see the opportunity now to make the investments in people that they need, to put the supports in place that people need. The reality is that we're living

in a global economy and we can say even North American economy that is uncertain. We don't know what the future holds. We don't know exactly what it's going to look like and employment has changed. Employment is not as stable as it used to be. It's tough to get ahead. It's tough to feel like you're getting ahead. And it's tough to imagine exactly what's in store for your children and your grandchildren because the economy is changing, because the nature of work is changing. And so we need to make sure that we do everything we can to put in place the conditions that will allow there to be opportunities for our kids and our grandkids.

So there are some big challenges that we're facing. We're putting some big ideas on the table because we're tackling these issues head on again. Again, I think that's what government exists to do, is to tackle the things that are big challenges that require some long-term thinking so that so that those conditions are in place for our kids and our grandkids. So one thing that we know about the changing nature of work is that families don't have access to the workplace benefits that they used to. So one of the things that we're doing is we are starting in January we're launching OHIP+ which will mean that prescription medication will be free for children and young people up to their 25th birthday and we're doing that because there has been a long conversation about pharmacare across this country. I think there's a fair consensus among certainly in the medical community but in the broader community that that is a gap in our health care system, it was not put in place when Medicare was brought in. We need a national pharmacare plan. We need the federal government to work with us. But in the absence of that we are taking a first step and so this will mean that kids will have access to 4,400 medications, the medications on the formulary, up to their 25th birthday and some people have said to me 'Well why 25? Why not 18?' Because in those years between 18 and 25 that's when kids get started, that's when they leave home, that's when they're getting established and they actually need that support. So up to their 25th birthday OHIP+ will be in place.

A second thing that we know about the economy is that young people need every opportunity to develop their talent and skills and kids from low-income families are four times less likely to go on to postsecondary education than kids from affluent families. That's a big gap. That means we're missing a lot of very talented young people. We need to get them into post-secondary education, whether it's college or university or a training program. And so beginning this fall college and university tuition will be free for young people who want to go. That means more than 200,000 young people will have access to free or better than free tuition.

A third thing that we know is that monthly budgets are tight. There's been a lot of discussion about electricity prices. There will continue to be when I do my scrum with the media. I know that there will be questions about electricity prices but what we know is that in 2003 when we came into office under the previous Premier, we had an electricity system that had not been invested in. We had lines across the province that needed to be upgraded. We needed to shut down the coal-fired plants to take the pollution out of the air and we needed a clean, renewable, reliable grid. And so that's what we've put in place. There's a cost associated with that. And so what we're saying is that 'You know what? That \$50 billion that we've invested to upgrade the system, we're going to spread that cost over a longer period of time.' And I can quite happily say to my grandkids who are you know they're little, they're in elementary school right now but I can say to them 'You know what? We're asking your mom and dad to pay a lot to pay for electricity, so we're going to give them a bit of a break so they can support you and do the things that you need. And when you're a little bit older you're going to be paying for a little bit of that electricity grid as well because you're going to be using it.' So that's what we're doing, we're spreading it over a longer period of time.

And fourthly, supporting communities is about supporting individuals but it's also about supporting the communities and listening to their specific needs. That's why three years ago we created the Permanent Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund, or OSIF as it's affectionately known. I thought about OSIF initially when I was Minister of Transportation because I had municipal leaders saying to me 'we need a reliable flow of money for infrastructure funding because we can't always count on being successful in applications to the province when there isn't a fund that is steady – here comes the rain. Roads and bridges and water systems are obviously critical to the quality of life in the north, so we've committed to tripling OSIF funding by 2019. It started out as a \$100 million, by 2019 it will be \$300 billion, and further to just having that funding in place, you said to us –municipalities said to us 'it shouldn't all be application fund. There should be a larger portion that is formula

based.' And so, by the time it's fully implemented, it will be \$200 million and formula based so that will be regular money that flows to you, and a \$100 million and application base. So the reason we're standing here at this bridge is that the Stevenson Road One Bridge is a great example of the impact that OSIF is having. You needed to fix the bridge. It was no longer safe to connect to your communities, and I heard about the fact that it was it had actually been built out of recycled wood in the first place, so there you go. It had done its time, and so the leaders in Bracebridge and in Huntsville came together, yay, that's great and acted as that force for good that I was talking about. They fixed the bridge and they applied to OSIF to help to manage the costs. So I'm very pleased to announce that the province is providing over \$1 million through OSIF to cover up to 90 per cent of the eligible project costs for the Stevenson Road One Bridge.

And a beautiful bridge it is, and I love that there's a pedestrian path there that's fantastic. So this is one of 55 new projects that will receive funding this year. And it's one of 426 communities that words will receive OSIF funding in 2017. There are 444 municipalities in Ontario so that tells you there are a lot of small communities that need support. And so we're very, very proud of this program. We believe that the province has a responsibility to help you grow to achieve that potential that every municipality is capable of and by doing that by investing in infrastructure that helps local economies and creates good jobs, we are doing our part on that. So I look forward to hearing from you, working with your municipal representatives to ensure that they continue to have the support that you need, and I want to thank all of you because a lot of you are here from the municipal sector whether elected officials or staff, thank you very much for the partnership because you have very much work closely with us. We look forward to continuing that. Thank you very much, merci. Miigwetch.

UNIDENTIFIED: Just again quickly, Madam Premier, thank you for your words today. Thank you.