

John Bozzo

From: John Bozzo
Sent: September 12, 2016 12:13 PM
To: Rosemarie Leclair; MaryAnne Aldred; Lynne Anderson; Peter Fraser
Cc: Neil Brodie
Subject: The Star Piece on Throne Speech

Here is The Star's piece in full.

Wynne announces 8 per cent HST cut from hydro bills in throne speech**Robert Benzie****Toronto Star**

<https://www.thestar.com/news/queenspark/2016/09/12/wynne-announces-8-per-cent-hst-cut-from-hydro-bills-in-throne-speech.html>

Electricity ratepayers will no longer be charged the 8-per-cent provincial portion of the harmonized sales tax on their hydro bills, Premier Kathleen Wynne's government has announced.

In a bid to jolt their flagging popularity, Wynne's Liberals delivered a consumer-friendly speech from the throne Monday that also promised 100,000 new child-care spaces over the next five years.

"Whether in Kenora, Sudbury, Belleville, London, or Barrie, your government has listened to and has heard your concerns," said the speech, which was read in the Legislature by Lieutenant Governor Elizabeth Dowdeswell.

"It recognizes that the cost of electricity is now stretching family budgets," the speech continued.

Eliminating the 8-per-cent provincial share of the 13-per-cent HST as of Jan. 1 will save the average household \$130 a year.

Many rural ratepayers, who cannot take advantage of the inexpensive natural gas for heating that urban Ontarians can, will receive an additional \$540 annually.

While that rebate will cost the treasury about \$1 billion a year, the Liberals insist they are on track to balance the books in the 2017-18 budget expected for March.

"Ontario's economy is still in transition, but our recovery is firmly track," Wynne said in a statement.

"While many are benefitting from the growth we've achieved, others have yet to share in Ontario's resurgence," the premier said.

The Liberals, who will mark their 13th anniversary in power next month, are smarting from the loss of the Scarborough-Rouge River byelection to the Progressive Conservatives on Sept. 1.

Mindful that Ontarians head to the polls in spring 2018, Wynne is desperate to give her majority Grits

a reboot.

“Our government understands the challenges people face and shares their concerns,” she said, vowing to deliver “real benefits and more inclusive growth that will help more people in their everyday lives.”

That “everyday” theme permeated nearly every one of the throne speech’s 17 pages.

“With economic growth and a balanced budget, your government will continue to build Ontario up, investing in the things that matter most to you and that help in your everyday life,” said the address, entitled “A Balanced Plan to Build Ontario Up for Everyone.”

“It will do that, first, by enhancing child care.”

Building upon the 56,000 new daycare spaces in the past three years, the Liberals will fund an additional 100,000 over the next five.

“Your government will also make it easier for parents to find and use the services their children need, whether they are before-and-after school programs, drop-in centres or more licensed child care spaces.”

When the government announced it would ban day care wait list fees that range from \$20 to \$200 as of Sept. 1, child-care activists said Wynne needed to create more spaces so new parents wouldn’t face a mad scramble to find spots for their kids.

Competition for spaces is tight, particularly in Toronto, where there are spots for just 21 per cent of children under the age of 5. Ontario now spends more than \$1 billion a year on 350,000 licensed day care spaces.

Stinging over the recent Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) tests that found half of Ontario’s Grade 6 students failed to meet the provincial mathematics standard this year, the government plans to emphasize math skills.

“To help students improve their mathematics skills, your government is implementing a renewed math strategy, including having up to three math lead teachers in all elementary schools.”

The falling EQAO scores — 58 per cent of Grade Six students met the standard in 2012 — has been blamed on kids’ anxiety over math and teachers’ lack of proficiency in the subject.

Beyond math, the government is “also setting a goal for every young person to have at least one opportunity for experiential learning.”

Pocketbook issues such as hydro and daycare dominated the speech.

The Liberals remain committed to selling the Hydro One transmission utility to bankroll public transit and roads and bridges.

The government’s carbon-pricing scheme to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change, which will cost the average household \$13 extra a month starting in January, is still on track.

Progressive Conservative Leader Patrick Brown, who attended Tory MPP Raymond Cho's swearing-in earlier Monday, and NDP Leader Andrea Horwath will offer their critiques of the government's plan later in the afternoon.

Both have been urging the Liberals to tackle soaring hydro prices; Horwath has been pushing for the scrapping of the HST from bills since 2010.

Ontario Public Service Employees' Union president Warren (Smokey) Thomas didn't wait to hear the speech to blast it; he said in a news release that Wynne's government needs "the boot, not a reboot."

"After two years of lurching from mistake to mistake, the Liberals don't need to 'refresh their brand.' They need to call an election," said Thomas.

"Kathleen Wynne's sudden interest in the needs of everyday Ontarians is all about her political survival, nothing more."

All government legislation on the order paper when the House was prorogued Thursday will be reintroduced, starting on Tuesday.

The first bill will be the campaign finance reform law sparked by a Toronto Star series last March.

Under the legislation, corporate and union donations to political parties will be banned, MPPs and candidates will be forbidden from attending party fundraisers, and contribution limits will be reduced to \$1,200 from \$9,975.

The new law will introduce public subsidies of the major political parties by giving them \$2.71 for every vote they received in the 2014 election.

Starting in January, annual payments will be \$5.06 million for the Liberals, \$4.09 million for the Conservatives, \$3.1 million for the New Democrats, and \$630,000 for the Greens.

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Jeff Blay

Communications and Digital Coordinator



595 Bay St. Suite 1202 | Toronto, ON, Canada | M5G 2C2 **Main:** 416-586-1474 ext 8336 **F:** 416-586-1480 **C:** 1-289.241.5114 **E:** jblay@enterprisecanada.com **W:** www.enterprisecanada.com Twitter: [@JeffBlay](https://twitter.com/JeffBlay) LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/JeffBlay](https://www.linkedin.com/in/JeffBlay)

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