

John Bozzo

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Transcript attached.

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PREMIER WYNNE'S KEYNOTE ADDRESS AT THE ECONOMIC CLUB OF CANADA

Date: January 19, 2017
 Length: 28 minutes
 Speaker(s): Premier Kathleen Wynne;

PREMIER KATHLEEN WYNNE: So thank you all for taking time in your schedules to be here. This is a really valuable opportunity for me to have the opportunity to share our plan for Ontario with business leaders like all of you. Carol has hit on some of the context within which we are working. And so I'm really eager to be able to talk about our current situation. But what I really value is that we'll have a chance to interact and I'll be able to hear some of your ideas and challenges. So I'm very much looking forward to that discussion.

We're at the start of a very big year for Ontario, for a number of reasons. On July 1st, our province, along with the country, turns 150.

[Speaking in French] I am pleased to be here with you all at this beginning of 2017, as Ontario celebrates its 150th anniversary.

[Speaking English] Ontario will be 150-years-old, and the year will be a celebration of our history and of the diverse and dynamic place that we call home. But the past 150 years to connect with what (inaudible) was saying tells only part of our story. And we know that, and I think that this gives us an opportunity in Ontario 150 to acknowledge that for generations this land has been home to peoples of Turtle Island. The first treaties were signed long before Confederation. And today 150 years later the treaties are still relevant to our lives and as many of you know I begin speeches this way to show respect for the contributions of Indigenous peoples and to recognize the role of treaty making in what is now Ontario. And today we are gathered on the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the New Credit. So I think our 150th anniversary actually takes on an added significance when we think about how we must learn to re-tell, and tell our story in a very different way. So I'm looking forward to the year, it's an opportunity to better understand our past, and it's a chance to unite around a shared vision of what our future is going to hold. So I look forward to the conversations that we'll have about the sort of province that we're building for our children and our grandchildren in the context of those celebrations.

2017 is also a significant year for Ontario because of where we find ourselves, the global and domestic context in which we are operating, right now. Our economy is starting the year in good shape. The best shape that it's been in since before the recession.

Last week the Globe and Mail wrote a piece called "For Ontario Everything's Coming Up Trilliums" and it was about the strength of our economy and about the fact that Ontario is Canada's top performer right now. Last year we created more jobs than the rest of the country combined. And this year analysts expect us to have Canada's fastest rate of economic growth. So the results of what we are building together are beginning to show. People are moving from other provinces because of the opportunities that your businesses are creating. That's why they're coming here. They're moving here because leaders like Google, Thomson Reuters, are putting down roots and creating new jobs right here. And because every day start-ups are launching, new businesses are growing, and that imagination is pretty boundless. So all of that together means we're starting the year in a relatively strong position. But that word 'relatively' is important. We know we can't be complacent. There are still many uncertainties that we need to be prepared for. And although we are in a relatively strong position we know that that context, because of its uncertainty, will have an impact on us.

So tomorrow our neighbour and biggest trading partner will swear in a new president. Now, we don't know exactly what the incoming US administration is going to mean for Ontario and that may be a bit of an understatement. But here's what we do know, at the start of what could be a

protectionist era, we need our businesses to be increasingly competitive. Whatever happens. We know that that needs to happen. And we need to make sure that our neighbours understand the mutual benefits of Canada-U.S. trade and specifically Ontario-U.S. trade. Now I say that it's important that our neighbors understand that but we need to understand that better too. So for example people in Ontario need to know that there are 20 states in the United States for whom Ontario is their number one export market. Another 7 for whom we are number two in terms of their export market. That is a, that's a reality that needs to be understood on both sides of the border. So even more importantly is that here at home we have to make growth itself more inclusive. If we're going to be a strong economy and if we're going to distinguish ourselves in that in that global context we have to have a strong inclusive economy. So as our economy grows we need everyone to be able to benefit from and contribute to that growth. And why is that so important. Because inclusive growth is a new term but it's not a new idea.

We've always stood for inclusive, for harnessing growth in the economy to create more opportunity and more security in the life of every individual and every family in the province and in the country. Universal public health care, the college and university system, the Canada Pension Plan, even our highways and the GO rail network demonstrate how inclusive growth creates real everyday benefits for workers and for their families. And when people can get ahead then that helps our economy stay ahead too.

But we're at this peculiar and challenging moment by every measure the economy is growing. It's growing stronger but people's experiences of that growing economy are uneven. People are not experiencing it the same way. A lot of families, a lot of individuals, are not feeling better off. Too many workers are not able to get ahead. And for many of the people I talked to there is not only uncertainty in the global context there's uncertainty in their own lives. People are feeling insecure in their own lives. And you know rightly so. On Tuesday I was at a Tim Horton's in Scarborough, I met a young woman named Marlene, and after about 15 years at an alarm company, a manufacturing company, she's suddenly out of work. And she was actually, just at that moment, on her way to an employment services center and she was hopeful but she was scared. And she said that to me she said she didn't know what was going to happen and it is scary. Change is happening quickly and people like Marlene are not alone. Even those who are doing better than they were a few years ago they're concerned about what happens if they lose their job. What would come next? How are they going to stay ahead, even though they've gotten ahead, how are they going to stay ahead? How are they going to save for retirement?

So, out of all that I've noticed, I've noticed something throughout my public life and this is relevant to how we make decisions, how we make economic decisions, how we make policy decisions. And what I've experienced in my public life is something about the way we think about improving our communities. And I don't know whether some of you have experienced this, but it's this notion that we have to deal with one part of our economic reality and then deal with another, and we have to do it in a certain sequence. So here's what I mean. We have to balance the budget, and then we invest in retraining services. Or we cut taxes and then we cut pollution. Except that that is not how it works. Somehow we never get to that second part. And so what I have said throughout my time in government is that we have got to be able to do those things simultaneously. We've got to be able to do them at the same time. We've got to have a balanced approach to make life more affordable for families and businesses now, and at the same time build for that kind of future that we know families need. We can't, we can't defer that to the future. We can't put any of that off. We have to find a way to work on all of that at the same time because our lives every single day, and our economy are not separate. We live every day in an economy and we need all of those pieces to be working.

I'll give you three quick examples of what I'm talking about. First of all, child care. There are not enough childcare spaces, particularly for those little babies, the zero to four-year-old kids, there

aren't enough spaces. So in September we announced that within five years we'll help create 100,000 new licensed childcare spaces for just that group of kids, the zero to four-year-olds. Because, remember, in Ontario when a child is four-years-old they then go into full-day kindergarten, and they have that support, including before- and after-school care. But it's those zero to four-year-olds that don't have that. Those 100,000 new spots are going to ease the burden on families. And they're going to make it easier for more women to participate in the economy. And they're going to give our littlest kids the very best possible start in life; set them up for success, so that as they go through their lives and go through our education system, and out into the world, they have the skills that they need.

The second example is the cost of college and university. Our number one strength is the talent and skills of our people. That is what makes us globally competitive. It's why businesses come here. And I can say that to you categorically. I hear it from you. Many of you in this room I've heard it from, but I hear it when I'm on trade missions, so people all around the world talk to me about our educated workforce. But we have, in Ontario, a stubborn gap. So what has happened is we haven't been able to, we haven't been able to bridge the gap in terms of college or university attendance between young people who are growing up in low-income families, and young people who are growing up in high-income families. And that gap holds us back because it means we're not getting all of the kids who have huge potential. Kids are struggling to fulfill their dreams. And we are not, we are not tapping into that. So we're transforming the system. Starting this September, we're making average tuition free for over 150,000 students from lower-income families. We're also increasing aid to students from middle-class homes. So you may have heard about the low-income free tuition, but, just so you know, it actually spreads up into middle-income. So, in other words, if you earn more, the new OSAP program is still there to help, it doesn't drop off. We're removing the financial barriers to higher education and we're making it accessible to everyone. That is how we, that is how we will be able to tap into those kids who might look at the cost of tuition. And it may be that they understand that they can get loans through OSAP, but they're fearful of the burden, the debt burden that they'll carry at the end. And that's why this is an important initiative.

I was at Brock University last week and I talked to a young man who was very involved, he was very involved in student politics, and in working with the university administrations. It was a very competent, highly...high functioning young man. And he he said to me, 'you know, because of this transformation that you're making, I won't have to stop my education, go and work for a year, and come back to finish my degree.' So it was going to make a huge difference for him. He was going to be able to continue his program and get a job in his field much faster. So this is going to make a real difference in people's lives today. And it's going to make an even more significant difference to the economy in years to come. It's that investment in the future.

The third example I want to use is public infrastructure. Many of you in this room have heard me talk about new roads, the transit, or new and renovated schools and hospitals. Our plans making a record-setting investment, \$160 billion over 12 years. And I want to put that in context. That amount is comparable to what the federal government is allocating for the entire country. So it's a significant injection of capital dollars into Ontario. That's the scale of what we are building in this province. And it includes transformational projects, like GO Regional Express Rail. GO RER will bring two-way, all-day service with 15 minute frequencies in both directions. That'll change people's lives. That'll change the way they organize their lives. It will build 12 new stations. And together with existing commitments, it means that we're making the largest commuter rail capital investment in the country. So building this much-needed infrastructure is creating tens of thousands of good jobs right now. And that's a huge economic boost. It makes, it makes sure that our economy can compete going forward because of that investment. And it will make a difference in people's lives every single day, whether it's your commute, whether it's renovations to your kid's school, or a new hospital in your community, each one of those examples carries

obvious economic benefits. And we've had to make the decision in order to realize those benefits, to make that investment.

But throughout all of that there's another theme. Every one of those examples that I used and so much of what we're building as a government comes down to families. And I want to, I want to use the term families in the broadest sense. It comes down to those people around you who you want to support and you want to see succeed. The people we love. The people we love are everything to us, no matter whether...no matter what business you're in, no matter where you live, the people that you love, who you define as your family, they're the most important thing in the world. And that doesn't change no matter who you are. So every day I have many issues that come across my desk, decisions that have to be made on a whole range of subjects. And what puts all of those decisions into context is family. So when I think about small business owners, I'm thinking about what we can do to help those companies grow and hire workers because of what those jobs mean for families. When I think about our health care system, I think about families who are relying on it this very moment. Either they're sitting in a hospital or they're looking for a doctor or they're looking for care for their elderly relatives. That's happening right now and so what we do in health care has an effect on their lives.

Last week I visited an organization called Stella's Place. It's a community based hub for young adults with mental health challenges. And I met a mom who when moving around the province. She had been looking not just across Ontario, she'd actually been looking across the continent trying to find the right supports for her daughter. And Stella's Place is the first organization where her daughter feels accepted and has been able to make progress. And I will just say that she and her family were instrumental in creating Stella's Place because they couldn't find what they were looking for. So those kinds of models are really important as we develop, as we develop responses to an increasing awareness of mental health challenges. And when I was in Orangeville last week at my grandson's daycare, in my pajamas, reading stories with all the kids and their moms, I was thinking at that time - because, of course, I was, I was grandma and these were all young women and young men with their kids - I was thinking about what those moms and dads are going through every day. You know, how long did...how long did they have to spend in traffic trying to make it there in time? Where is their work? How convenient is it? How are...are they able to spend time with their kids? Are they worrying about how they're going to cover the costs of child care? And those are the concerns that we all carry in our hearts; caring for the people who we love. That's what binds us. That's the reality that we all deal with.

But the fact is that we are all busy. We're caught up in our lives. So think about climate change. Most of us agree that we need to tackle climate change for our kids and our grand kids, but we're more worried about our loved ones and the issues that come up in our own lives on a day-to-day basis than we are about climate change every single day. And that's okay. That's fine. That's what makes us human. And it's why we have government. It's why we created government as a society, to bring people together to do the things that we can't do alone. To help make the choices that will ensure that our families can thrive today, that they're okay today, and that they'll be okay tomorrow. So that actually describes what's probably my biggest challenge as Premier: it's how to find ways to invest in what we need to do to create opportunity, to create security for people in the long term, and at the same time make sure that we're providing the supports for everyone to get ahead right now, creating opportunities and making life more affordable for today. And finding that balance is not easy. I'm here to tell you, it is not easy. It's the challenge every single day in this job. And we are working actively to find that balance. And I know you will not be surprised to know that electricity is a great example of something that I have spent a lot of time on as premier because, frankly, we got that balance wrong. But, you know, if we are going to be frank, I have to acknowledge, and I think you would agree, that not so long ago the electricity system was a mess in this province. Blackouts. Smog days. The system was broken because there had not been the will, on the part of politicians of all stripes - this is not a partisan comment - but there had been

government after government that had made decisions that were politically expedient and had not invested in the system and were not thinking about the long term. And so we had no choice but to fix it. And today what we've got in Ontario is a clean electricity system. It's reliable because of all the work that we have done, and the work that you have all done with us because this is not something the government does alone. Everyone takes part. But what that means is there are no more blackouts, there no more smog days. We made the investments that ensured that that was the case. But the cost of the changes has burdened people all across Ontario. That's the reality.

And, you know, I have heard from many, many people in the last little while. I've been setting aside time to call, not just to respond in writing, but to call people who I've been writing to me, sending me emails, sending me letters about their electricity bills. I want to hear about what they're going through. And I want them to know that I'm listening. And people have lots of ideas. And so we're, we're tapping into those. And I recently spoke to a gentleman in Ottawa Valley, in the Ottawa Valley. He's retired. He's living on a fixed income. And he saw that energy prices were going up here, as they were all over the continent. So he found the money to install some new energy efficient windows. So he was he was taking action. His name was Lloyd. And he took action ahead of what he saw as the increases that were going to come. But still, even though he made those investments, he is still gobsmacked by the hydro bill that he's getting every month and that's why he wrote, that's why he wrote to me. He wrote to me about delivery charges that make up 50 per cent of his bill. And he actually said to me he feels like he's being punished for the investments that he made. And, you know, what I, what I said to him was he has every right to be angry. It's not fair. That shouldn't be happening. Somebody who has had the foresight to make investments shouldn't then be falling farther behind. So that's why we've lowered electricity bills by eight per cent, the provincial portion of the HST; that starts...started on the 1st of this month. But that's not, that's not enough for people like Lloyd in rural communities, immediate savings are more like 20 per cent. And that's going to make a difference. But even with that I know that it's still not enough and that's what I'm hearing from people. Because at the end of the day, what people like Lloyd should be paying for is the electricity that they use. And that's not, that's not isolated in their costs. And that's why I'm...that's why I've committed to finding more ways to lower rates, to reduce the burden on consumers, and we're going to be working on that in the weeks and the months ahead. And, in fact, that work is well underway. I'm listening to the people of the province. I'm listening to the people who run our system. And I am going to make changes because it's the right thing to do.

But I have to be clear. Quitting coal was also the right thing to do. That was an important long-term decision. Our air is cleaner. Asthma rates are way down. Our kids are able to breathe easier. And now, if we look at other jurisdictions, others are following our lead. Look across the globe to other places, they are struggling to do exactly what we have done. So the political winds will shift from time to time, but the prevailing winds around the world are moving us toward a low carbon global economy. That's, that's where we are headed, in essence. Fighting climate change is still the right thing to do. It's the right thing to do for families and for our economy. It's the right thing to do for our competitiveness today and tomorrow. We just need to be smart about it. And that's precisely why we chose to cap pollution, starting on January 1st of this year. An emissions cap is the lowest cost way for families and businesses to transition to a low carbon economy. And I'm not suggesting that the transition won't be without its bumps. It will...there will be bumps. It won't be uniformly easy. We all know that. So we've chosen an emissions cap program because it will help make the transition affordable for homes and businesses right now. By law, every dollar raised will go back to the people and businesses of Ontario, to environmental programs, and initiatives that help cut emissions and make all of us more efficient. And that is every dollar that comes in.

And the picture that you're looking at right now, I was at the home of the O'Hara's. They are a young family who took advantage of programs to make investments in home energy retrofits. And they got rebates as a result of that because those programs already exist. And today they use

way less energy to heat and cool their home. Now, I seem to have my coat on in that picture, and as I was looking at it I was thinking, that's not probably a great message. Their house was very warm, so don't get the wrong idea. But we were kind of in the dress up corner of the little girl, and we both had colourful outfits on. So it's not to do with how efficient their heating is.

So. So what we're going to do is help more people to do exactly what the O'Hara's did with our emissions cap and climate change action plan. We're expanding those rebate programs so that more people can do exactly the same thing. And that goes back to the idea that I talked about earlier, this false notion that we have to first balance the budget, then make college and university more affordable, or give people a break that they need on their hydro bills. That's not how life works. With a balanced plan to build Ontario up for everyone, we are and we have to do all of those things at the same time. And I know that there are people who will say it's impossible. But they won't, in that instance really provide any alternative. It's easy to say, you can't do that. It's not so easy to say, well this is how we're going to resolve the issues. And we are, together, proving them wrong.

In just a few months' time, Ontario will table its first balanced budget since before the recession. And we have not done that by slashing services or raising middle income...middle class income taxes. We've brought the budget back to balance by keeping government spending in check, and making the right investments in people and in their communities. And that's what we said we were going to do. We're balancing the budget, while making that record investment in infrastructure that I talked about. We're doing it while building not just the fastest growing most innovative economy in Canada, but an economy that grows inclusively. And that means working together to address those issues that we face in our lives every day that prevent us from being at our best. That's what inclusive growth means.

We're focusing on every parent who's worrying about who's going to care for their new baby, every family who's struggling to pay their electricity bill, every high school student thinking about how to afford college, and every senior who's at risk of being left behind after spending his or her life building this province up, and every worker who's been laid off and is looking for a job and is thinking about giving up because they don't see how their skills can transfer to the jobs that are available. And we're doing this and thinking of every small business that's looking to grow because we know that small business is what makes us strong.

So we are working together. I appreciate all that you do every day. And we're doing that to make government a force for...the force for good that we need it to be. You know, we can't do this alone. And so when I say we're working together to make government a force for good, I really mean that. The partnerships that we have with people in this room, and beyond this room, are critically important for the strong functioning of our of our government.

So on our 150th birthday I am proud to be an Ontarian. I'm proud of this province. I hope that you are too. I'm pretty sure you are. We have a lot more to do, but I absolutely know that we're up to the challenge. So thank you, all of you, for being here. Thank you for the leadership that you show every single day. And I'm looking forward to our conversation. Merci. Meegwetch.