

# AN ANALYSIS OF ONTARIO'S SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

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The Ford Government used the Speech from the Throne to reiterate his Party's core promises from the campaign trail. There were no surprises. With this Speech from the Throne, it is clearer than ever that this government plans to move forward, singularly focused on achieving their "promise made, promise kept" mantra.

There will be no dialling back. Rather, stakeholders will need to get creative in aligning their goals to help this government achieve their commitments.

Close attention should be paid to the language used in this Throne Speech, including the emphasis on "economic uncertainty," Ontario's finances being left in "a precarious position," and sending a message that Ontario is "open for business."

Ever-present in the text was also the language of inclusiveness, a concept captured by affirmations that, in the face of "mounting challenges at home and abroad," we must "reject the old compromises. And embrace change." The Ford government seeks to "move past the politics of division" and "look beyond our differences – in race, region, language, gender, religion, lifestyle, sexual orientation or creed – and recognize that all of us are Ontarians and Canadians first. Because no matter where any of us come from, or how long we have lived here, it should be clear that when Ontarians work together, there is no challenge that cannot be overcome." While this theme has been a staple of Progressive Conservative messaging for the last several years while in opposition, it demonstrates a marked departure from more common expectations of governing PC caucus in Ontario.

This symbolism was further emboldened by Premier Ford's personal branding of a government that works "For the People." In a relatively short speech of just 94 sentences, seven of them (7.5% of the speech) include a reference to governing "for the people" or a variation of that phrase.

Combined, these themes suggest that those seeking to influence the government should ensure that they are able to clearly explain, as simply and directly as possible: how their proposal or policy will make it easier to do business in Ontario, promote private sector job creation, and lead to either a discernible improvement in services for individual Ontarians, or a material reduction in public spending and therefore taxes. Stakeholder

efforts which do not revolve around one or more of these themes are unlikely to be well received.

The summer sitting will see legislative movement towards the dismantling of the existing cap and trade system in Ontario and an attempt to preclude any future carbon tax implementation, the cancellation of the White Pines Wind Project in Prince Edward County, and the resolution of the York University labour dispute.

Most of the remaining legislative agenda will be raised starting in the Fall sitting. Staffing of key positions is on-going: Director-level staff in the Premier's Office has been announced and most Ministers' Chiefs of Staff have been selected but not yet made public. Other vacancies will continue to be filled throughout the summer, with extensive briefings consuming much of their time.

**Below is a summary of key points from the Throne Speech:**

- Ensure Ontario can afford services for the future, especially the long-term sustainability of funding for health care.
- Commission of Inquiry into the financial practices of government to identify ways to restore accountability and trust in the Ontario government.
- Conduct a thorough line-by-line audit of all government spending to identify and eliminate duplication and waste.
- Return Ontario to a balanced budget on a time table that is responsible, modest and pragmatic.
- Reduce gas prices, lower hydro bills, and provide immediate tax relief to parents, small business owners, and the working poor.
- Scrapping cap and trade system and oppose a carbon tax.
- Protect Ontario's interests in NAFTA by cooperating with the federal and other provinces, but also through direct interaction with the 28 U.S. states for which Ontario is a major market.
- Maintain the operation of the Pickering Nuclear Generating Station.
- Rewriting the Ontario curriculum, specifically math and sex-ed.
- Invest in a world-class transit system for the GTA and address transit needs in other urban centres.
- Return veto power to municipalities for renewable energy projects.
- Expand beer and wine sales to convenience, grocery and big box stores.