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of Ontario

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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 20 November 2003

Jeudi 20 novembre 2003

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 20 November 2003

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 20 novembre 2003

The House met at 1500.

His Honour the Lieutenant Governor entered the chamber and took his seat upon the throne.

Hon James K. Bartleman (Lieutenant Governor): Pray be seated.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): May it please Your Honour, the Legislative Assembly has elected me as their Speaker, though I am but little able to fulfill the important duties thus assigned to me.

If, in performance of those duties, I should at any time fall into error, I pray that the fault may be imputed to me and not to the assembly, whose servant I am and who, through me, the better to enable them to discharge their duty to their Queen and country, hereby claim all their undoubted rights and privileges, especially that they may have freedom of speech in their debates, access to your person at all seasonable times and that their proceedings may receive from you the most favourable consideration.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): Speaker, I am commanded by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor to declare to you that he freely confides in the duty and attachment of the assembly to Her Majesty's person and government and, not doubting that the proceedings will be conducted with wisdom, temperance and prudence, he grants and upon all occasions will recognize and allow the constitutional privileges.

I am commanded also to assure you that the assembly shall have ready access to His Honour upon all suitable occasions and that their proceedings, as well as your words and actions, will constantly receive from him the most favourable construction.

His Honour the Lieutenant Governor was pleased to open the session by reading the speech from the throne.

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

DISCOURS DU TRÔNE

Hon James K. Bartleman (Lieutenant Governor): Mr Speaker, members of the Legislative Assembly, citizens of Ontario:

Canada lists among its hallmarks peace, order and good government.

Ontario has a parliamentary tradition that allows for a peaceful and orderly transition from an old government to a new one.

Following the recent election, I asked Dalton McGuinty to form the government of Ontario.

I then presided over the swearing-in of the new Premier and the executive council.

Today, it is my privilege as Her Majesty's representative to deliver this new government's first speech from the throne.

Your new government looks to the future with high hopes.

It knows what Ontarians can do because it has seen what Ontarians have done.

There have been pulls on the seams in our social fabric—but this fabric has refused to tear.

There have been challenges to the health of our economy—but this economy remains strong.

There have been those who would dismiss our values as out of date—but these values have proven timeless.

Ontarians can do anything, when they work, and dream, and build together.

What they ask of their government is honesty, responsibility, hard work, innovation, and a genuine commitment to the future.

Your new government is honest enough to tell you about the challenges we face.

So here are the facts: Ontario faces a major problem, one that stands in the way of a better future for all of us.

And it's urgent that we fix it.

It threatens the important public services we have now, and our opportunity to improve them in the future.

This isn't lofty rhetoric. This is down-to-earth reality.

Your new government asked former Provincial Auditor Erik Peters to give you the straight goods on Ontario's budgetary position.

He reported that Ontario faces a \$5.6-billion inherited deficit.

Irresponsible tax cuts have meant that, since the year 2000, program spending has grown more than 10 times faster than tax revenue.

Ontario's economy is strong, but the provincial government's finances are weak, and that threatens the public services we all need to keep our economy strong.

The state of the province's finances is simply not sustainable or affordable—not for Ontario families, and certainly not for their children and grandchildren.

Your new government will take this challenge on, working with you.

It will not paper over this problem with money it does not have.

It will not try to make it disappear with accounting tricks.

And it will never sit on its hands and do nothing.

If it did nothing, the \$5.6-billion inherited deficit would grow to \$7.7 billion next year, and nearly \$8.6 billion in 2007.

That's not an option, not when the amount Ontario already spends on servicing the provincial debt—\$8.7 billion—is almost as much as we spend on our schools.

That's not an option, when doing nothing would mean less and less support for the public services Ontarians depend on.

Your new government was elected to improve our health care and our schools, to build stronger communities and an even stronger economy.

And it will deliver real, positive change in all of these areas.

It will do so relentlessly, but responsibly.

The first improvements it makes will make a real difference. But they will be affordable and they will be responsible.

A contractor hired to add rooms to the second floor of your house would be negligent if he discovered a fire in the basement—and failed to put it out.

A government elected to improve health care and education would be negligent if it discovered a deficit large enough to threaten the hospitals and schools we have now—and chose to ignore it.

Your new government chooses to tackle this problem for the right reasons—not so it can hand out tax cuts to a few, but so it can provide opportunity for all by preserving and then improving Ontario's important public services.

In this session, this Legislature will be asked to take immediate action on the inherited \$5.6-billion deficit.

Our corporate taxes are already competitive, so your new government made a commitment to roll back the latest portion of the tax cut for corporations.

Legislation will be introduced to keep that commitment.

1510

Les familles de l'Ontario ont dit au nouveau gouvernement de ne pas diminuer leurs impôts pour le moment parce que toute réduction d'impôt augmenterait le déficit et menacerait les services publics.

En conséquence, le nouveau gouvernement s'est engagé à maintenir le taux d'imposition du revenu des particuliers à son niveau actuel.

Le gouvernement proposera une loi pour respecter cet engagement.

Ontario families have told your new government not to reduce their taxes at this time, because it cannot afford tax cuts without adding to the deficit and threatening public services.

So this new government made a commitment to maintain personal income tax rates at the current level.

Legislation will be introduced to keep that commitment.

Our seniors want good schools for their grandchildren, so this new government made a commitment to eliminate the seniors' education tax credit.

Legislation will be introduced to keep that commitment.

Our public schools have fallen into disrepair and discord, and require new resources and a fresh approach, so this new government made a commitment to cancel the tax credit for private schools.

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Ontarians want their hard-earned tax dollars used to serve them—not to spin them.

So your new government made a commitment to eliminate the waste of taxpayers' dollars on partisan, political advertising.

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Ontarians want everyone to do their part, so this new government made a commitment to ensure corporations that have not been paying their taxes start paying their fair share.

That commitment will be kept.

Ontarians want the government to spend their tax dollars wisely, so this government made a commitment to reduce what the Provincial Auditor has called an over-reliance on highly paid consultants.

That commitment will be kept.

Ontarians want their government to live within its means, so your new government made a commitment to have a responsible approach to the province's finances, for a change.

In the face of what we now know is a \$5.6-billion inherited deficit, the current electricity price freeze is neither sustainable nor responsible.

It keeps prices artificially low and makes Ontarians pay the difference. It threatens our ability to improve our education and health care.

Your new government will present an electricity pricing plan that better reflects the true cost of electricity—and the true state of Ontario's finances—while giving Ontarians an incentive to conserve.

Taken together, these measures will take your new government a long way toward keeping one of its core commitments: achieving a truly balanced budget.

But the job will not be done, and it cannot be completed, without the help of millions of Ontarians.

The new year will see this new government engage Ontarians in a new dialogue.

Your new government will ask Ontarians to help write next spring's budget, by putting before them the real choices facing this province.

It will put before the public ideas that are big and bold and even controversial.

Ontarians understand that you cannot tackle a big problem by tinkering around its edges, and you can't deliver real, positive change by doing things the same, old way.

We need to change how government works so it works for Ontarians in a way that's responsible, affordable, and sustainable.

This is not exactly the job your new government applied for, but it is the job it has been given to do.

And it will get the job done.

It will get the job done because it's the right thing to do: This year's deficit alone would cost Ontarians an additional \$280 million in additional interest payments.

By the end of year four of this mandate, that number would grow to \$1.1 billion—enough to pay for 15,000 nurses, 16,000 teachers, or 1,000 MRIs.

Your new government will get the job done so that it can provide more nurses, teachers, and MRIs for Ontario families—instead of additional interest payments for Ontario's creditors.

Your new government remains determined to deliver real, positive change by improving the public services Ontarians depend on.

It is equally resolute that it must first secure the fiscal foundation upon which those services are built.

It is a foundation we must secure together, in the public interest.

Your new government will ask its partners in health care, education, and the broader public sector to temper their requests for more with the realization that what we have now is at risk.

If Ontarians work together today, in a responsible way, we can build an even brighter future tomorrow.

Your new government knows we can only achieve great things when we work, and dream, and build together, for a change.

And it is confident that Ontarians will respond to the challenge before us.

This challenge will affect the pace of change.

But your new government will make change happen.

That change has already started, and it will continue in this session of the Legislature.

These changes will be affordable, gradual, and practical.

They will make a real, positive difference in the lives of Ontarians.

They will reflect Ontarians' values, and Ontarians' priorities.

Your new government's first and most important priority will always be excellence in public education.

Its goal is to make Ontario's public education the world's best education.

The groundwork for this shared accomplishment will be set in this session.

Your new government will keep its commitment to introduce legislation designed to cancel the reckless private school tax credit that drains dollars and hope away from better public education.

It will keep its commitment to bring stability and peace to a system that has been racked by turmoil for too long.

It proposes to form a genuine education partnership with this province's school boards, principals, teachers, the wider community, and most important, parents and students.

Your new government will work with schools to make real improvements in children's reading, writing and math skills.

It will keep its commitment to make our schools safer.

School councils will be invited to conduct safety audits to evaluate their need for enhancements such as security cameras at school entrances to keep out intruders.

A provincial anti-bullying hotline will be established and anti-bullying programs developed at all schools.

Communities will be asked to define citizenship values for Ontario's new character education program in their local school boards to strengthen our students' education experience.

Your new government will treat educators with the respect they deserve as the single most important influence, apart from the family, in terms of shaping the future of our children and our province.

The Premier will institute the Premier's Awards for Teaching Excellence to celebrate exceptional teachers and the work they do for their students.

New programs to ensure teaching excellence—designed in co-operation with a revitalized Ontario College of Teachers—will replace the expensive and unproductive teacher testing program.

Les écoles appartiennent aux parents, aux enfants ainsi qu'aux collectivités où ils vivent et étudient.

C'est pourquoi votre gouvernement a déjà respecté l'engagement qu'il a pris de restaurer le principe de la démocratie locale dans les conseils scolaires.

Votre gouvernement reconnaît l'urgente nécessité d'adopter une stratégie en matière d'éducation en français, et il va immédiatement constituer un groupe de travail chargé de veiller à ce que tous les enfants de l'Ontario reçoivent une excellente éducation.

Schools belong to parents, children, and the communities in which they live and learn.

That is why your new government has already kept its commitment to restore the principle of local democracy in our school boards.

It acknowledges the urgent need for a francophone education strategy and will strike a task force immediately to ensure that all Ontario children receive an excellent education.

The path to a better society, and a more prosperous economy, runs through our public schools.

Your new government believes that, for too long, that path has been strewn with conflict, cuts, and chaos.

It's time to begin to build a new path, with co-operation, creativity, and a genuine commitment to what's best for our children.

By tackling the inherited deficit, your new government will strengthen the foundation for its Excellence for All education plan, including smaller classes in the early grades, learning until age 18, and its Best Start plan for early childhood education.

Ontario's commitment to public education is a measure of our foresight.

Our commitment to medicare is a measure of our insight.

Ontarians understand that we are all made stronger by our system of universal, public medicare.

Ontarians want to be competitive—and compassionate.

Medicare makes us both.

1520

The Romanow Commission confirmed that Canadians do not want one system for the wealthy, who can buy their way to the front of the line, and another for everyone else, who would be forced to wait at the back of it.

In fact, your new government will be entering into new agreements for publicly owned hospitals in Brampton and Ottawa. This will ensure that these facilities are not privately owned.

It will keep its commitment to introduce the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act.

If passed, it will protect and improve universal, public medicare for all Ontarians by making two-tier, pay-your-way-to-the-front-of-the-line health care illegal in Ontario.

If passed, it will enshrine in provincial law the five principles of medicare: universality, portability, comprehensiveness, public administration, and accessibility.

And it will add a sixth principle: accountability.

If a health care dollar is wasted, a patient waits. If a health care dollar is spent wisely, a patient benefits.

Legislation will also be introduced to keep this government's commitment to give the Provincial Auditor new powers to examine how public funds are spent by transfer partners in education and health care, including hospitals and other health care organizations.

Your new government will propose changes to give the chief medical officer of health the independence required to protect Ontarians.

New legislation will be introduced to create a new health quality council.

This independent council will report directly to Ontarians on how well their health care system is working—and how well their government is working to improve health care.

Your new government understands it can only hold others to a higher standard if it subjects itself to the same standard.

It is keeping its commitment to work with other governments to create a national health council.

It is keeping its commitment to work co-operatively with the federal government on health care, in the interests of Ontarians.

Already, this new approach is finding success. There is more money coming for health care. And the federal government committed this week to cover half of the true costs associated with SARS. This is welcome news, but there is much more to do, and your new government will continue to work with Ottawa to fix health care, instead of merely affixing blame.

Your new government understands that money alone will not save medicare. Nor will legislation alone. Real,

positive reform is needed, starting with primary health care.

It will keep its commitment to improve primary health care through the creation of family health teams, made up of health care professionals who will protect and promote the health of Ontarians.

These teams will ensure patients get care closer to home and health care dollars are wisely spent.

Your new government understands that promoting good health is as important as treating illness.

It will make cigarettes more expensive to prevent young people from lighting up, and it will make public and workplaces in Ontario smoke-free within three years.

Like public education, medicare is at a crossroads. Ontarians have told your new government which direction they want chosen—the one that protects and improves universal medicare.

By tackling the inherited deficit, your new government will strengthen the foundation for the Health Care We Need plan, including more family doctors, nurses, and hospital beds.

Ontario's economy is strong and vibrant, but it faces challenges from beyond our borders, and a threat from within.

Other jurisdictions are working hard to invest in building workforces that can attract the most investment and the best jobs.

Ironically, the province's own finances threaten to hold back our economy, by draining more dollars into servicing our debt, and limiting our ability to improve our workforce, and our prosperity.

Ontario's colleges, universities, and skills training programs are critical to creating prosperity.

Your new government will put in place a long-term plan that ensures the quality and accessibility of higher education for generations to come.

While that plan is put in place, tuition fees will be frozen for two years.

Your new government believes our province's diversity is a tremendous source of strength.

It will work with the federal government to finalize immigration and labour market development agreements that build on this strength.

It will keep its commitment to ensure that highly qualified, internationally trained tradespeople and professionals can work in their chosen field, here in their chosen province.

Your new government will celebrate the hard-working entrepreneurs who create jobs and attract investment, and support their endeavours here at home and abroad.

It will work to support and protect our hard-working farmers, and promote their products by promoting food safety.

It will take the necessary steps to assure Ontarians their meat is safe.

Your new government will do its part to ensure all of our businesses can operate in a stable climate, by delivering reliable, affordable electricity.

It will begin to bring new supply on-line, and pave the way for new electricity generation, by introducing a new, responsible plan for electricity pricing.

It will give Ontario businesses and families the information and tools they need to conserve electricity—and save money.

Trade with other provinces and other countries, particularly the United States, is our lifeblood. Our economy depends on it.

Your new government has already begun talks with other provinces, aimed at breaking down interprovincial trade barriers. And it will work with the federal and US state governments to ensure our borders are safe, efficient, and open to trade.

A commitment was made to help hard-working families make ends meet before they reach their wits' end. That commitment will be kept.

For the first time in eight years, there will be an increase in the minimum wage.

Legislation will be introduced to end the 60-hour workweek.

And action will be taken on auto insurance.

Your new government has already acted to stop applications for rate hikes, and will now work to bring rates down.

Your new government understands that for Ontario to succeed in a highly competitive and global economy, we need every Ontarian, from our youngest citizens to our seniors, at their best.

Your new government will keep its commitment to treat seniors with respect and dignity. Its first step will be to set high standards for nursing homes.

Your new government will work with Ontarians with disabilities on meaningful legislation that will allow them to fully participate in building a stronger province.

The strength of our province depends, too, on the strength of our communities.

Yet our communities are not all they can be.

Ontarians want cleaner air, their water protected, and their green space preserved.

They want their communities to be more livable, safer, stronger.

Your new government will strengthen our communities and work with other governments to create a new deal for cities.

It will keep its commitment to introduce legislation that will establish a permanent greenbelt across the Golden Horseshoe, and a new commission to protect it.

It will introduce legislation to establish a Greater Toronto Transportation Authority, which will improve public transit, reduce gridlock and improve the air we breathe.

Your new government will keep its commitment to ban the disposal of untreated toxic sludge.

It will keep its commitment to stop the practice of giving away our precious fresh water resources.

It will keep its commitment to implement the O'Connor recommendations, starting with the hiring of

more water inspectors and stronger protection of our drinking water at source.

Shortly, your new government will take the first steps toward replacing our biggest polluters by phasing out Ontario coal-fired electricity generating plants.

Communities will be encouraged to grow smart.

Your new government will introduce legislation that will give the Ontario Municipal Board a new direction—one that encourages sustainable growth instead of sprawl.

1530

It will keep its commitment to intensify growth within our cities by rehabilitating brownfields.

Your new government will make our communities safer.

More will be done to protect women and children from domestic violence, including improvements in the provision of second-stage housing for victims.

Your new government will work with the federal government to amend the Criminal Code to make it more difficult for accused abusers to make bail.

It will work with the police to develop risk assessments for those accused of domestic violence.

Deadbeat parents who fail to support their children will be held to their family responsibilities.

New measures will be put in place to ensure children get what they need and what they are owed.

Pregnant women on social assistance will get the nutritional supplements they need.

Your new government will introduce legislation to protect tenants with real rent control.

This government congratulates the newly elected municipal leaders across Ontario and invites them to work with this government, as partners.

It will keep its commitment to introduce legislation that ensures a strong voice for the north, by keeping 11 northern representatives in this chamber.

Your new government will create northern development councils as a direct link from northern communities to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

One of the first issues to be examined by these councils will be how to best encourage young northern Ontarians to stay in northern Ontario.

This new government's commitment to govern for all Ontarians—those from cities and towns, from north and south—will be kept.

Ontarians have said they do not want their province divided by region or area code.

They want to build a strong province by building strong communities. By tackling the inherited deficit, your new government will strengthen the foundation for the Growing Strong Communities plan, including better public transit and more affordable housing.

Ontarians want a government that works for them.

Your new government has made a commitment to bring an open, honest and transparent approach to government.

It is keeping that commitment.

In this session, it will introduce the most ambitious democratic renewal legislation ever seen in Ontario.

It will open up government and its agencies, bring the voices of Ontarians to Queen's Park, and make the entire public sector more transparent and responsible to Ontarians, because transparency and accountability are the best safeguards of public services.

Already, this new government has appointed a new minister for democratic renewal.

It has given every government MPP a role on the powerful cabinet committees that help guide government policy.

In the months ahead, this new government will give all members an opportunity to do more on behalf of their constituents.

All ministers of the crown will be expected to consistently attend question period, and be accountable to the Legislature.

The spring budget will be held in this chamber. Every budget will. And every budget will reflect what Ontarians have told this new government they want done.

We have the best-informed citizenry in the history of this province. Your new government is going to call upon Ontarians to share their ideas, to describe how government can work better for them.

Ontario is fortunate to have a hard-working public service that is second to none. Your new government is going to call upon public servants to share their ideas on how we all can best serve the public.

Your new government will do what needs to be done.

It will tackle the \$5.6-billion deficit it has inherited—responsibly, but relentlessly.

It is clear-eyed but optimistic.

Votre nouveau gouvernement sait ce qu'il a à faire.

Il sera honnête avec la population et ne lui cachera pas les défis auxquels il fait face.

Il sera assez responsable pour relever ces défis, au lieu de les fuir, de les dissimuler ou de les transmettre à nos enfants et à nos petits-enfants.

Il travaillera aussi fort que les citoyennes et citoyens qu'il a le privilège de servir.

Il fera preuve de créativité et assainira les finances de la province d'une façon compatible avec les valeurs de la population.

Votre nouveau gouvernement remplira son mandat afin d'offrir des changements réels et positifs à la population de l'Ontario.

Your new government understands its job.

It will be honest with Ontarians, giving them the straight goods on the challenges we all face.

It will be responsible enough to tackle those challenges, instead of running away from them, or hiding them, or passing them on to our children and grandchildren.

It will work as hard as the people it is privileged to serve.

It will be innovative, fixing our finances in a way that's in keeping with Ontarians' values.

Your new government will get the job done, so it can deliver real, positive change for the people of Ontario.

In this historic chamber, in the woodwork that adorns the government side of the House, an artisan has carved three words.

They are: integrity, industry, and intelligence.

As we begin to write a new chapter for Ontario, let us be mindful of them.

Your new government believes strongly:

We can have excellence for all in public education.

We can deliver the health care we need.

We can grow strong communities.

We can change how government works.

We can build a prosperous economy, in which every Ontarian can reach his or her full potential...

If we have the integrity to tell people the truth about the challenges we face.

If we are industrious enough to work as hard as the people we are privileged to serve.

If we are intelligent enough to realize that we can only lead the people of Ontario by listening to the people of Ontario...

Then, together, we can make Ontario the envy of the world, once again.

Let's get to work.

Singing of O Canada!

His Honour was then pleased to retire.

1540

Prayers.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I beg to inform the House that, to prevent mistakes, I have obtained a copy of the speech from the throne, which I will now read.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): Dispense.

Interjections: No.

The Speaker: Agreed?

Interjection: No.

The Speaker: Mr Speaker, members of the Legislative Assembly, citizens of Ontario:

Canada—dispense?

Interjection: No.

The Speaker: Canada lists among its hallmarks peace, order and good government.

Ontario has a parliamentary tradition that allows for a peaceful and orderly transition from an old government to a new one.

Following the recent election, I asked Dalton McGuinty to form the government of Ontario.

I then presided over the swearing-in of the new Premier and the executive council.

Hon Mr Duncan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: All the members have certain guests here, and I know we on this side are looking forward to hearing the speech again, but perhaps it would be in order to have a five-minute recess to allow our guests, many of whom I'm sure didn't plan to be here the additional time, to leave the chamber. Would that be agreeable to the House?

The Speaker: Is there consent? Agreed.

The House recessed from 1545 to 1551.

The Speaker: There have been those who would dismiss our values as out of date—but these values have proven timeless.

Ontarians can do anything, when they work, and dream, and build together.

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Ontarians want the government to spend their tax dollars wisely, so this government made a commitment to reduce what the Provincial Auditor has called an over-reliance on highly paid consultants.

That commitment will be kept.

Ontarians want the government to live within its means, so your new government made a commitment to have a responsible approach to the province's finances, for a change.

In the face of what we now know is a \$5.6-billion inherited deficit, the current electricity price freeze is neither sustainable nor responsible.

It keeps prices artificially low and makes Ontarians pay the difference. It threatens our ability to improve our education and health care.

Your new government will present an electricity pricing plan that better reflects the true cost of electricity—

and the true state of Ontario's finances—while giving Ontarians an incentive to conserve.

Taken together, these measures will take your new government a long way toward keeping one of its core commitments: achieving a truly balanced budget.

But the job will not be done, and it can only be completed with the help of millions of Ontarians.

The new year will see this new government engage Ontarians in a new dialogue.

Your new government will ask Ontarians to help write next spring's budget, by putting before them the real choices facing this province.

It will put before the public ideas that are big and bold and even controversial.

Ontarians understand that you cannot tackle a big problem by tinkering around its edges, and you can't deliver real, positive change by doing things the same, old way.

We need to change how government works so it works for Ontarians in a way that's responsible, affordable, and sustainable.

This is not exactly the job your new government applied for, but it is the job it has been given to do.

And it will get the job done.

It will get the job done because it's the right thing to do: This year's deficit alone would cost Ontarians an additional \$280 million in additional interest payments.

By the end of year four of this mandate, that number would grow to \$1.1 billion—enough to pay for 15,000 nurses, 16,000 teachers, or 1,000 MRIs.

Your new government will get the job done so that it can provide more nurses, teachers, and MRIs for Ontario families—instead of additional interest payments for Ontario's creditors.

1600

Your new government remains determined to deliver real, positive change by improving the public services Ontarians depend on.

It is equally resolute that it must first secure the fiscal foundation upon which those services are built.

It is a foundation we must secure together, in the public interest.

Your new government will ask its partners in health care, education, and the broader public sector to temper their requests for more with the realization that what we have now is at risk.

If Ontarians work together in a responsible way, we can build an even brighter future tomorrow.

Your new government knows we can only achieve great things when we work and dream and build together, for a change.

And it is confident that Ontarians will respond to the challenge before us.

This challenge will affect the pace of change.

But your new government will make change happen.

That change has already started, and it will continue in this session of the Legislature.

These changes will be affordable, gradual and practical.

They will make a real, positive difference in the lives of Ontarians.

They will reflect Ontarians' values and Ontarians' priorities.

Your new government's first and most important priority will always be excellence in public education.

Its goal is to make Ontario's public education the world's best education.

The groundwork for this shared accomplishment will be set in this session.

Your new government will keep its commitment to introduce legislation designed to cancel the reckless private school tax credit that drains dollars and hope away from better public education.

It will keep its commitment to bring stability and peace to a system that has been racked by turmoil for too long.

It proposes to form a genuine education partnership with this province's school boards, principals, teachers, the wider community and, most important, parents and students.

Your new government will work with schools to make real improvements in children's reading, writing and math skills.

It will keep its commitment to make our schools safer.

School councils will be invited to conduct safety audits to evaluate their need for enhancements such as security cameras at school entrances to keep out intruders.

A provincial anti-bullying hotline will be established and anti-bullying programs developed at all schools.

Communities will be asked to help define citizenship values for Ontario's new character education program in their local school boards to strengthen our students' education experience.

Your new government will treat educators with the respect they deserve as the single most important influence, apart from family, in terms of shaping the future of our children and our province.

The Premier will institute the Premier's Awards for Teaching Excellence to celebrate exceptional teachers and the work they do for their students.

New programs to ensure teaching excellence, designed in co-operation with a revitalized Ontario College of Teachers, will replace the expensive and unproductive teacher testing program.

The path to a better society, and a more prosperous economy, runs through our public schools.

Your new government believes that, for too long, that path has been strewn with conflict, cuts, and chaos.

It's time to begin to build a new path, with co-operation, creativity and a genuine commitment to what's best for our children.

By tackling the inherited deficit, your new government will strengthen the foundation for its Excellence for All Education plan, including smaller class sizes in the early grades, learning until age 18, and its Best Start plan for early childhood education.

Ontario's commitment to public education is a measure of our foresight.

Our commitment to medicare is a measure of our insight.

Ontarians understand that we are all made stronger by our system of universal, public medicare.

Ontarians want to be competitive—and compassionate.

Medicare makes us both.

The Romanow Commission confirmed that Canadians do not want one system for the wealthy, who can buy their way to the front of the line, and another for everyone else, who would be forced to wait at the back of it.

In fact, your new government will be entering into new agreements for publicly owned hospitals in Brampton and Ottawa. This will ensure that these facilities are not privately owned.

It will keep its commitment to introduce the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act.

If passed, it will protect and improve universal, public medicare for all Ontarians by making two-tier, pay-your-way-to-the-front-of-the-line health care illegal in Ontario.

If passed, it will enshrine in provincial law the five principles of medicare: universality, portability, comprehensiveness, public administration, and accessibility.

And it will add a sixth principle: accountability.

If a health care dollar is wasted, a patient waits. If a health care dollar is spent wisely, a patient benefits.

Legislation will also be introduced to keep this government's commitment to give the Provincial Auditor new powers to examine how public funds are spent by transfer partners in education and health care, including hospitals and other health care organizations.

Your new government will propose changes to give the chief medical officer of health the independence required to protect Ontarians.

New legislation will be introduced to create a new health quality council.

This independent council will report directly to Ontarians on how well their health care system is working—and how well their government is working to improve health care.

Your new government understands it can only hold others to a higher standard if it subjects itself to the same standard.

It is keeping its commitment to work with other governments to create a national health council.

It is keeping its commitment to work co-operatively with the federal government on health care, in the interests of Ontarians.

Already, this new approach is finding success. There is more money coming for health care. And the federal government committed this week to cover half of the true health care costs associated with SARS. This is welcome news, but there is much more to do, and your new government will continue to work with Ottawa to fix health care, instead of merely affixing blame.

Your new government understands that money alone will not save medicare. Nor will legislation alone. Real, positive reform is needed, starting with primary health care.

It will keep its commitment to improve primary care through the creation of family health teams, made up of health care professionals who will protect and promote the health of Ontarians.

These teams will ensure patients get care closer to home and health care dollars are spent wisely.

Your new government understands that promoting good health is as important as treating illness.

It will make cigarettes more expensive to prevent young people from lighting up, and it will make public and work places in Ontario smoke-free within three years.

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker: Dispense?

Interjection: No.

The Speaker: Like public education, medicare is at a crossroads. Ontarians have told your new government which direction they want chosen—the one that protects and improves universal medicare.

By tackling the inherited deficit, your new government will strengthen the foundation for the Health Care We Need plan, including more family doctors, nurses, and hospital beds.

Ontario's economy is strong and vibrant, but it faces challenges from beyond our borders, and a threat from within.

Other jurisdictions are working hard to invest in building workforces that can attract the most investment and the best jobs.

Ironically, the province's own finances threaten to hold back our economy, by draining more dollars into servicing our debt, and limiting our ability to improve our workforce, and our prosperity.

1610

Ontario's colleges, universities, and skills training programs are critical to creating prosperity.

Your new government will put in place a long-term plan that ensures the quality and accessibility of higher education for generations to come.

While that plan is put in place, tuition fees will be frozen for two years.

Your new government believes our province's diversity is a tremendous source of strength.

It will work with the federal government to finalize immigration and labour market development agreements that build on this strength.

It will keep its commitment to ensure that highly qualified, internationally trained tradespeople and professionals can work in their chosen field, here in their chosen province.

Your new government will celebrate the hard-working entrepreneurs who create jobs and attract investment, and support their endeavours here at home and abroad.

It will work to support and protect our hard-working farmers, and promote their products by promoting food safety.

It will take the necessary steps to assure Ontarians their meat is safe.

Your new government will do its part to ensure all of our businesses can operate in a stable climate, by delivering reliable, affordable electricity.

It will begin to bring new supply on-line, and pave the way for new electricity generation, by introducing a new, responsible plan for electricity pricing.

It will give Ontario businesses and families the information and tools they need to conserve electricity—and save money.

Trade with other provinces and other countries, particularly the United States, is our lifeblood. Our economy depends on it.

Your new government has already begun talks with other provinces, aimed at breaking down interprovincial trade barriers. And it will work with the federal and US state governments to ensure our borders are safe, efficient, and open to trade.

A commitment was made to help hard-working families make ends meet before they reach their wits' end. This commitment will be kept.

For the first time in eight years, there will be an increase in the minimum wage.

Legislation will be introduced to end the 60-hour workweek.

And action will be taken on auto insurance.

Your new government has already acted to stop new applications for rate hikes, and will now work to bring rates down.

Your new government understands that for Ontario to succeed in a highly competitive and global economy, we need every Ontarian, from our youngest citizens to our seniors, at their best.

Your new government will keep its commitment to treat seniors with respect and dignity. Its first step will be to set high standards for nursing homes.

Your new government will work with Ontarians with disabilities on meaningful legislation that will allow them to fully participate in building a stronger province.

The strength of our province depends, too, on the strength of our communities.

Yet our communities are not all they can be.

Ontarians want cleaner air, their water protected, and their green space preserved.

They want their communities to be more livable, safer, stronger.

Your new government will strengthen our communities and work with other governments to create a new deal for cities.

It will keep its commitment to introduce legislation that will establish a permanent greenbelt across the Golden Horseshoe, and a new commission to protect it.

It will introduce legislation to establish a Greater Toronto Transportation Authority, which will improve public transit, reduce gridlock, and improve the air we breathe.

Your new government will keep its commitment to ban the disposal of untreated toxic sludge.

It will keep its commitment to stop the practice of giving away our precious fresh water resources.

It will keep its commitment to implement the O'Connor recommendations, starting with the hiring of more water inspectors and stronger protection of our drinking water at source.

Shortly, your new government will take the first steps toward replacing our biggest polluters by phasing out Ontario coal-fired electricity generating plants.

Communities will be encouraged to grow smart.

Your new government will introduce legislation that will give the Ontario Municipal Board a new direction—one that encourages sustainable growth instead of sprawl.

It will keep its commitment to intensify growth within our cities by rehabilitating brownfields.

Your new government will make our communities safer.

More will be done to protect women and children from domestic violence, including improvements in the provision of second-stage housing for victims.

Your new government will work with the federal government to amend the Criminal Code to make it more difficult for accused abusers to make bail.

It will work with the police to develop risk assessments for those accused of domestic violence.

Deadbeat parents who fail to support their children will be held to their family responsibilities.

New measures will be put in place to ensure children get what they need and what they are owed.

Pregnant women on social assistance will get the nutritional supplements they need.

Your new government will introduce legislation to protect tenants with real rent control.

This government congratulates the newly elected municipal leaders across Ontario and invites them to work with this government, as partners.

It will keep its commitment to introduce legislation that ensures a strong voice for the north, by keeping 11 northern representatives in this chamber.

Your new government will create northern development councils as a direct link from northern communities to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

One of the first issues to be examined by these councils will be how to best encourage young northern Ontarians to stay in northern Ontario.

This new government's commitment to govern for all Ontarians—those from cities and towns, from north and south—will be kept.

Ontarians have said they do not want their province divided by region or area code.

They want to build a strong province by building strong communities. By tackling the inherited deficit, your new government will strengthen the foundation for the Growing Strong Communities plan, including better public transit and more affordable housing.

Ontarians want a government that works for them.

Your new government has made a commitment to bring an open, honest and transparent approach to government.

It is keeping that commitment.

In this session, it will introduce the most ambitious democratic renewal legislation ever seen in Ontario.

It will open up government and its agencies, bring the voices of Ontarians to Queen's Park, and make the entire public sector more transparent and responsible to Ontarians, because transparency and accountability are the best safeguards of public services.

Already, this new government has appointed a new minister for democratic renewal.

It has given every government MPP a role on the powerful cabinet committees that help guide government policy.

In the months ahead, this new government will give all members an opportunity to do more on behalf of their constituents.

All ministers of the crown will be expected to consistently attend question period, and be accountable to the Legislature.

The spring budget will be held in this chamber. Every budget will. And every budget will reflect what Ontarians have told this new government they want done.

We have the best-informed citizenry in the history of this province. Your new government is going to call upon Ontarians to share their ideas, to describe how government can work better for them.

Ontario is fortunate to have a hard-working public service that is second to none.

Your new government is going to call upon public servants to share their ideas on how we all can best serve the public.

Your new government will do what needs to be done.

It will tackle the \$5.6-billion deficit it has inherited—responsibly, but relentlessly.

It is clear-eyed but optimistic.

In this historic chamber, in the woodwork that adorns the government side of the House, an artisan has carved three words.

They are: integrity, industry, and intelligence.

As we begin to write a new chapter for Ontario, let us be mindful of them.

Your new government believes strongly:

We can have excellence for all in public education.

We can deliver the health care we need.

We can grow strong communities.

We can change how government works.

We can build a prosperous economy, in which every Ontarian can reach his or her full potential ...

If we have the integrity to tell people the truth about the challenges we face.

If we are industrious enough to work as hard as the people we are privileged to serve.

If we are intelligent enough to realize that we can only lead the people of Ontario by listening to the people of Ontario...

Then, together, we can make Ontario the envy of the world, once again.

Let's get to work.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

AN ACT TO PERPETUATE AN ANCIENT PARLIAMENTARY RIGHT

LOI VISANT À PERPÉTUER UN ANCIEN DROIT PARLEMENTAIRE

Mr Duncan, on behalf of Mr McGuinty, moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 1, An Act to perpetuate an Ancient Parliamentary Right / Projet de loi 1, Loi visant à perpétuer un ancien droit parlementaire.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour, say "aye."

Those against, say "nay."

I think the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1623 to 1628.

The Speaker: I would ask that those who are in favour of the motion please rise one at a time.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Parsons, Ernie
Baird, John R.	Gerretsen, John	Patten, Richard
Bartolucci, Rick	Gravelle, Michael	Peters, Steve
Bentley, Christopher	Hoy, Pat	Peterson, Tim
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jeffrey, Linda	Phillips, Gerry
Bisson, Gilles	Kennedy, Gerard	Pupatello, Sandra
Bountrogianni, Marie	Kormos, Peter	Qadri, Shafiq
Bradley, James J.	Kular, Kuldip	Racco, Mario G.
Brotten, Laurel C.	Kwinter, Monte	Ramal, Khalil
Brown, Michael A.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ramsay, David
Brownell, Jim	Leal, Jeff	Rinaldi, Lou
Bryant, Michael	Levac, Dave	Runciman, Robert W.
Cansfield, Donna H.	Marchese, Rosario	Ruprecht, Tony
Caplan, David	Marsales, Judy	Sandals, Liz
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Martel, Shelley	Sergio, Mario
Churley, Marilyn	Matthews, Deborah	Smith, Monique
Colle, Mike	Mauro, Bill	Smitherman, George
Cordiano, Joseph	McMeekin, Ted	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Craitor, Kim	McNeely, Phil	Van Bommel, Maria
Delaney, Bob	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wilkinson, John
Di Cocco, Caroline	Milloy, John	Witmer, Elizabeth
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mitchell, Carol	Wong, Tony C.
Duguid, Brad	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duncan, Dwight	Murdoch, Bill	Zimmer, David
Dunlop, Garfield	Oraziotti, David	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 77; the nays are 0.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

MOTIONS

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I move that the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor to this House be taken into consideration Monday, November 24, 2003.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I am not suggesting that this required notice. I am conceding that it is but a procedural motion, not a substantive one. However, I am suggesting that it warrants debate. If you will take a look, sir, at the standing orders, in particular 45(d), I point out that a motion for adjournment of debate—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): —that this is debatable.

Mr Kormos: May I?

The Speaker: Yes.

Mr Kormos: Yes, it is debatable. I point out to you, sir, that this is a debatable motion.

Interjections: Agreed.

Mr Kormos: Good. OK.

Hon Mr Duncan: Speaker, I am going to debate on behalf of the government caucus.

Applause.

Hon Mr Duncan: Yes, it's nice for a change. We won one tonight.

Mr Speaker, this motion allows the House to begin to consider the government's speech from the throne next Monday, allowing all members of the House to participate in a fair and equitable fashion, which we are providing for. With that, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those against, say "nay."

I think the ayes have got it.

Call in the members. There will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1633 to 1703.

The Speaker: Would all the members who are in favour of this motion please rise and remain standing.

Thank you. Please be seated.

All those who are against will please rise and remain standing.

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 73; the nays are 5.

The Speaker: The motion is carried.

Hon Mr Duncan: I move adjournment of the House.

The Speaker: Are you in favour of the adjournment of the House?

All those in favour, say "aye."

Those against, say "nay."

I think the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

Division bells rang from 1706 to 1736.

The Speaker: Will all the members please take their seats.

All members in favour of the motion, please rise and remain standing.

Please be seated.

All those who are against the motion—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. All those against, please rise and remain standing.

Clerk of the House: The ayes are 68; the nays are 5.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

This House stands adjourned until 1:30 on Monday.

The House adjourned at 1738.

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