

2022 ONTARIO SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

AUGUST 9, 2022

SUMMARY

Following the incumbent Ontario PC government's recent re-election, the Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario, the Hon. Elisabeth Dowdeswell, delivered today the customary Speech from the Throne in the opening of the first session of Ontario's 43rd Parliament. The speech is a symbolic exercise by the Queen's representative in Ontario, outlining the government's agenda for the new parliamentary session.

Entitled *Together, Let's Build Ontario*, the speech focused on existing commitments made by the Ontario PCs in the recent election, including commitments to build new highways and transit infrastructure, attract electric vehicle manufacturing investment, as well as to implement a skilled trades strategy that seeks to address current labour shortages.

In her speech, the LG referenced a global "growing sense of uncertainty," due to COVID-19, high inflation, and the war in Ukraine; and the resulting impact on supply chains already weakened by COVID. The government also reflected on its actions and achievements in the past four years, as well as its response to the COVID-19 pandemic, while cautioning that new fiscal challenges, driven by unprecedented pandemic spending had created a need for prudent economic management.

To face the challenges of this new economic reality, the government highlighted commitments to economic recovery, infrastructure and

transportation investments, measures to address affordability and cost of living, new education and healthcare spending, and supports for workers. The LG also recognized that while Ontario had made significant progress in advancing its health care system, it continues to experience significant pressures, including an exhausted workforce and increasingly stressed emergency departments, stating that "more could be done". Notably absent from the speech were any commitments to address current workforce shortages although the Government did say "that "it will not be limited by conventional thinking that stifles innovation and preserves a status quo" in healthcare" which may signal innovative changes to Ontario's healthcare system in the future.

As for additions to the pre-election budget, the speech highlighted the government's recent announcement that it would be boosting Ontario Disability Support Payments (ODSP) by 5% and tie future increases to inflation. It also pledged to give an additional \$225 million in direct payments to parents "to help their kids catch up."

In closing, Dowdeswell paid tribute to Ontario's potential by reciting verses from Ontario's unofficial provincial anthem 'A Place to Stand, A Place to Grow', a work commissioned by former Premier John Roberts for Expo67. Dowdeswell highlighted the song's role in helping defining Ontario's sense of self, its place in Canada and the world. More than half a century later, its lyrics still ring true.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS



With today's Throne Speech, it is clear that this government is eager to rebuild Ontario and keep the province moving forward. The speech is largely consistent with what Premier Ford promised in the budget earlier this year and on the campaign trail, legitimized by the PC's recent electoral success.

From economic recovery, supporting workers and making historic investments into transit infrastructure to tackling the rising cost of living and modernizing healthcare, the Ford PC's have a future with everyone in mind. As the government returns stronger for a second mandate, it will look to execute on its five pillars to rebuild Ontario all the while enjoying majority status. Ontarians should expect a government that listens to their concerns irrespective of ideology, one that is focused on pragmatic solutions.

The Throne Speech touted the government's achievements in the past four years, while also acknowledging that "more can still be done" in healthcare. This progressive outlook bodes well for the people of Ontario in every region, while granting the private sector opportunities to provide solutions. With the backing of Ontario's voters, the government is all set to execute its vision for the next four years, and it's safe to say work has already begun... - Darcy Walsh, Edelman Global Advisory President (Canada)

The Speech from the Throne is essentially the government putting into action, it's platform and pre-election budget with strategic acknowledgements of more current issues such as inflation, the war in Ukraine and healthcare staffing shortages, exacerbated by COVID-19. While the government has addressed that there are ongoing healthcare issues specifically around staffing shortages, the Speech from the Throne does not lay out a plan to address these issues head on. Rather the government promised to "take bold action that prioritizes patients and their health above all else", hinting at the onset of healthcare innovation in Ontario on precipice of a four-year majority. This will no doubt stoke fears and at the very least, discussion around the privatization, in the health care system. - Marsha Seca, Managing Director, Public & Government Affairs, EGA (Ontario)

The 2022 Ontario Government's Throne Speech built on Premier Ford's aspired reputation of being a responsive, "fix it" Premier who is driven more by practical solutions to immediate crises than to any ideological entrenchment or agenda. This flexible populism is why Premier Ford was entrusted with a second mandate to govern Ontario in the recent election, and the Premier focused on the growing challenges that are facing our health system. Across Canada, staffing shortages, long wait times for emergency services, surgeries, follow-up visits with specialists and acute care have been getting headlines and driving the public to demand action from their governments.

The speech outlined what the government feels it has already accomplished on the health file while acknowledging "more can still be done." Further, they commit to "actionable solutions.... and will implement whatever measures are needed to help ease immediate pressures." Again, a signal to the pragmatism that Premier Ford wants to be known for, without specific policy commitments up front.

The Throne Speech began with a warning about ongoing global economic turmoil and its impacts on Ontario. The speech notes, "Unprecedented spending throughout the pandemic has created new fiscal challenges here in Ontario and across Canada that will require prudent economic management in the months and years to come." The government is laying the groundwork for the upcoming realignment of government spending to reflect revenue capacity, which is a reflection of a stagnant economy that we will be struggling with for many quarters to come. - Hon. James Moore, P.C., Senior Advisor, former Federal Cabinet Minister

KEY THEMES



Economic Recovery

The government is pledging to reduce the cost of doing business in Ontario by \$7B annually, attract \$12 billion in new investments for new vehicle production mandates and battery manufacturing, and accrue \$8.9 billion in cost savings.



Affordability & Cost of Living

To combat the increasing cost of living, the government temporarily cut the provincial gas tax rate by 5.7 cents per litre, eliminated the cost of renewing licence plates, and is increasing the minimum wage to \$15.50 per hour on October 1, 2022. The government has also committed to building 1.5M homes over the next 10 years.



Infrastructure

The government is investing \$86.6B over the next ten years to build highways and transit infrastructure, including Highway 413 and the Bradford Bypass. As highlighted in the budget earlier this year, the Ring of Fire continues to be a core infrastructure investment that will connect mineral extraction and manufacturing.



Continued Health Spending

In addition to continued monitoring of the COVID-19 situation, the government is investing \$1B to expand home and community care. A continued point of contention between the federal and provincial government, the speech encouraged the federal government to increase health transfers from the current 22% to 35%.

KEY THEMES CONTINUED



Education

With the past two years of pandemic disruptions, Ontario is ensuring that students are back in classrooms. As part of Ontario’s Plan to Catch Up, the government launched a province-wide tutoring program, supported by a \$175M investment. Additionally, the Throne Speech highlighted that the re-introduction of their pre-election budget will include an additional \$225M over two years in direct payment to parents “to help their kids catch up”.



Supporting Workers

As previously outlined in the budget, the government is committed to investing more than \$1B in the Skilled Trades Strategy to reduce the harmful stigma around trades. The government is also working on breaking down barriers that prevent out-of-province workers and newcomers from finding jobs in the trades. With the government’s investments in infrastructure and manufacturing, hundreds of thousands of new jobs will be created in the province.

WHAT’S MISSING?

- While the Speech from the Throne touches on many key issues that were central to Ford’s election campaign, some anticipated details are not abundantly clear at this stage.
- Although healthcare was brought up in the Throne Speech, the delivery of services remains complex and as such specific next steps may come at a later date. This will be an area to watch as the new Minister of Health, Hon. Sylvia Jones, settles into the position.
- Few details were shared today around climate change policies, however the government has signaled it will continue to invest in a cleaner future by, for example, investing in electric vehicles manufacturing as well as inviting investment into ‘Clean, Green Steel’.
- As is expected, opposition parties have criticized the speech for failing to address current issues. These include healthcare, inflation, the labour shortage, the rising costs of living as well as climate change.

WHAT’S NEXT?

- The Standing Orders allow for a maximum of 12 hours of debate on the motion for an Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne, which provides Members with an opportunity to evaluate and comment on its content. At the conclusion of the debate, a vote, usually considered a vote of confidence in the government, is taken.
- The Legislative Assembly will continue sitting until December 9, when Members will break for the winter holidays.
- Directly after the speech was given, Minister of Finance, Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy, tabled the new budget. It was largely the same as the budget tabled in April with some notable exceptions. There will be a five percent increase to the Ontario Disability Support Program and an additional \$225 million over two years to help students catch up in their studies.
- The next pieces of legislation that are expected to be tabled include a bill for increasing the mayoral powers in Toronto and Ottawa along with moving forward on key infrastructure promises, such as building Highway 413 and developing the Right of Fire.

STAKEHOLDER REACTIONS



“More than 60 per cent of Ontarians didn’t support Ford’s budget the first time around. Re-tabling the same budget — ignoring the health care crisis and inflation — is ignoring what people want and need.” - Peter Tabuns, Interim Leader of the Ontario NDP



“Today, Doug Ford had the opportunity to address the ongoing labour crisis in our healthcare system, introduce new measures that would make life more affordable for families who are finding it harder and harder, each and every day, to make ends meet, and take real action to combat climate change. Instead, he has reintroduced a budget that fails to reflect today’s reality and the issues currently faced by Ontarians.”

- John Fraser, Interim Leader of the Ontario Liberal Party



Ontario’s universities support the commitments outlined in @ONgov’s Throne Speech & budget. By working together, we will continue to partner to build Ontario by developing a highly skilled workforce & driving regional economic development - Council of Ontarian Universities



The province reiterated a strong commitment to an Ontario Made recovery – one that focuses on finding the workers we so desperately need, and mitigating the crushing effects of inflation on business investment. An essential part of this recovery is the establishment of a comprehensive advanced manufacturing strategy, and an economic council to support it. CME looks forward to working with the government and our members on implementing this important budget commitment.

- Canadian Manufactures and Exporters

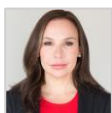


“The past few years have been characterized by tremendous uncertainty: a prolonged pandemic, record-high inflation, supply chain disruptions, labour shortages, and geopolitical turmoil. If we want our economy and people to emerge stronger amid so much uncertainty, Ontario must focus on creating the right conditions to support competitiveness, productivity, and growth. We look forward to continued collaboration with the Government of Ontario and all parties over the next four years.”

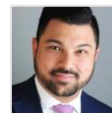
- Rocco Rossi, CEO and President of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce



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