

**Speech by Tim Hudak, MPP
Ontario PC Leader
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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Thank you very much, Alfred [Maggio, Incoming ORBA President, President of Graham Bros. Construction] for that kind introduction.

And congratulations on becoming the Ontario Road Builders' new president.

I want to thank ORBA for inviting me to speak this afternoon. I hope everyone is enjoying the convention so far. Of course, I suppose that depends on how late you were out enjoying the Super Bowl last night.

As a Buffalo Bills fan, that hasn't been a problem for me in almost 20 years!

I want to start out by giving credit where credit is due. I want to thank you, the members of ORBA, for the investments you make in our province and its people. Especially in the last couple of years.

At a time when our manufacturing and housing sectors were struggling, you put a lot of people to work. You helped to keep the lights on in their homes. You helped to keep bread on the table for their families.

You are not only the builders of roads, bridges and transportation systems – you are the builders of strong communities. For that, I thank you.

I also believe you make a tremendous impact with your annual Worst Roads Campaign. I remember participating in a Worst Roads event some years ago in my Niagara riding with Gary Sidlar and members of CAA.

We found a perfect candidate in Beamsville that was full of potholes and cracked pavement. You could literally bend down and pick chunks of asphalt out from the middle of the crumbling road.

With the turnaround on repairs you see once roads make your infamous annual list, I should have brought Gary by the road to my house.

This thing has never seen a drop of asphalt and probably never will. And this time of year you need a four wheel drive just to get out of the driveway!

Friends, Ontario's Worst Roads aren't the only dangerous paths we travel today. I also believe Ontario is headed down the wrong path.

And just like the wheel alignment on the car of a Steeles Avenue commuter, Ontario is in need of a serious adjustment.

I want to be Premier to fight for those average hard working families and business owners who are playing by the rules, who are paying all of their bills, but are falling further and further behind.

Quite frankly, when it comes to the current government, they've fallen off the radar screen completely.

Now, don't get me wrong, I think Dalton McGuinty means well, and I think his heart is in the right place. But after eight years in office, he has become out-of-touch with what's happening on the ground in communities and in households today.

And, quite simply, he and I come at the challenges Ontario families are facing from completely different directions.

THREE DIFFERENT CHOICES

And with this in mind, I want to share with you three ways a future PC government will move Ontario forward, that are different than the approaches taken by the government today.

First, a PC government will put its faith in the private sector to be Ontario's engine of job creation and economic development – not bigger and more expensive government.

If big government spending were the solution, Ontario would be in some kind of economic Nirvana by now.

Over the last eight years, government spending increased by 70 percent while Ontario's economy has grown by just 9 percent – a rate nearly eight times as fast.

You can't run your business that way. You can't run your home that way.

And while the public sector has grown by nearly 300,000 positions – at the same time the private sector has lost nearly 300,000 manufacturing jobs.

What's worse it's this bloated bureaucracy that's holding you up from creating more private sector jobs.

Ladies and gentlemen, instead of bigger government, I believe it's the government's role to create the right conditions for the private sector to succeed, to create jobs – and then get out of the way.

That means getting the fundamentals right, like: competitive taxes; reliable, affordable energy; cutting red tape; and stable, predictable long-term infrastructure planning.

Let me explain where I am coming from on a few of these points.

We must reduce the growing creep of government regulation that is costing you time and money.

That means addressing excess fill regulations and the ESA – which are both one-size-fits-all pieces of government regulation that target road building projects whether it's warranted or not.

The same goes, in many cases, for 'permits to take water'.

We all understand the need for regulation – but who in this room thinks for a second that we can't be doing a better job here?

A PC government will treat you with respect you deserve, not with suspicion.

I also have a very different perspective than the Premier when it comes to energy.

I believe energy policy should be economic policy, not the social program it has become.

We should focus on creating reliable and affordable energy to attract jobs, to ensure businesses can continue to hire new staff, and ensure families and seniors can still pay the bills.

But Ontario has been taken down a path of very expensive energy experiments, which includes signing sweetheart deals with multinational corporations like Samsung at rates of up to 80 cents per kilowatt hour.

I reject the notion that seniors on fixed incomes, families with two or three kids, and small business owners who are seeing their bills go through the roof, should be subsidizing a multinational corporation like Samsung – which just announced record profits.

A PC government would end these massive subsidies that are driving up hydro rates and pare down bureaucracy in the energy sector.

We believe renewable energy should be a part of Ontario's supply mix, but it must be at rates families, seniors and businesses can afford – and in communities where it's welcome.

And we will put consumers, and not special interests, at the forefront of every decision we make.

An Ontario PC government will also deliver a long-term infrastructure plan to ensure stable and predictable funding for construction projects.

Good transportation systems and roads are critical to creating new jobs and a stronger economy.

To help ensure the construction sector maintains its capacity to build and maintain those systems – I believe government must pursue long-term planning in infrastructure in terms of not years, but decades.

And it must stick to that plan.

In recent years, we have seen the McGuinty government make promises on big infrastructure projects only to backtrack at a later date.

Transit projects in Toronto and Kitchener-Waterloo – and the 407 East have been delayed and shortchanged. The Mid-Peninsula Corridor through Hamilton and Niagara has been outright shelved and stopped.

Ladies and gentlemen, as Premier I will pursue a predictable, transparent program you need to run your businesses.

You make your business decisions based on a long timeline. Government should do the same.

And once the plan is established, we will stick to it – starting with the full expansion of the 407 and building the Mid-Pen Highway.

Second, instead of trying to be all things to all people, we need to focus on the basics; on services people care about and need.

Government has become too big, too expensive and too clumsy at delivering crucial frontline services.

I swear, you can take any three letters in the alphabet, put them in any order you want – and you will get a government board, agency or commission you never heard of, but you are paying tens of millions of dollars a year to sustain.

Put an 'e' in front of it... and you're up in the billions!

The challenge is we're digging ourselves into a hole so deep that – if we continue at this pace – we may never be able to climb back out again.

We absolutely must get the size of government under control.

That's why the Ontario PC Caucus recently launched a new website dedicated to rooting out government waste.

It's called [Waste Watchers.ca](http://WasteWatchers.ca) and it allows Ontario families to submit their own waste stories to the Ontario PC Caucus.

It's an opportunity for all of you to blow the whistle on wasteful government spending you encounter through your businesses or in your own neighbourhoods.

Let me give you one of the worst examples. The so-called Local Health Integration Networks or LHINs.

Basically, these are regional health bureaucracies that come between the Ministry of Health and doctors and nurses, and the patients they care for.

To date, LHINs have taken some \$250 million dollars out of frontline health care to support their bloated layer of bureaucracy.

People at the LHINs don't spend a single minute of their day with patients. They've never performed a single surgery.

They've never run an MRI machine, but every day they are taking health care dollars out of the system.

Instead of expanding hospitals that provide frontline care and reducing wait times for families, this government has been constructing new buildings for its regional health bureaucrats.

That's why, as Premier I will close the doors on the LHINs and put every penny back into frontline health care for Ontario families.

Third, and finally, friends, we need to make life more affordable for average hard working families, seniors and small business owners who are seeing their bills go through the roof.

At the end of the day, when you get home from the office or the job site, you face the same challenges as any Ontario family.

The HST added 8 percent more to gas, heat for our homes, and hydro bills.

Now it's looking like they're making the Debt Retirement Charge, which also appears on our monthly hydro bills, a permanent tax grab.

The average Ontario household has seen their hydro rates increase 75 percent in eight years. If you've got a smart meter, your rates are over 100 percent.

Smart meters are nothing more than Dalton McGuinty tax machines.

Not every senior can get up getting up at midnight to wash their clothes or do the dishes. Not every parent can scramble to get their kids showered and fed before 7 am to cut back on energy costs.

That's why a PC government will pull the plug on Dalton McGuinty's forced smart meter tax grab.

Higher hydro bills. Higher taxes, higher fees, higher auto insurance. It's adding up. And enough is enough.

I want to encourage you to go to our website HaveYourSayOntario.ca.

You will find we've laid a number of options on the table when it comes to providing families with the confidence to manage the family budget and start spending again.

An Ontario PC government will give that relief to hard working families and seniors, who today are struggling to make ends meet.

CONCLUSION

Ladies and gentlemen, these ideas I've outlined are just three of the different choices a PC government would make to ensure Ontario's growth and potential isn't squandered.

In the months ahead, as we get ready for the election campaign, you will see a full plan to govern that will put families first and make life more affordable for them, get government focused on the services we care about and need, and make private-sector job creation a priority.

Friends, I believe Ontario's best days are still to come, but we need to change the course we are on.

I want Ontario once again to be the economic engine that drives this great country.

I want to get government focused on the services that people care about and need – rather than bigger bureaucracy.

I want to ensure that my daughter Miller will have every opportunity to succeed that I've had – and then some.

In closing, I want to thank the people in this room again – for the jobs you create, the families you help to sustain, and the investments you make in our great province.

And my friends, working together, we can deliver change. Change for Ontario families.

Thank you very much.