

Remarks by Elizabeth Witmer, MPP
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Guelph-Wellington PC Riding Association
Fundraising Dinner

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Guelph Place, Guelph

It is a pleasure and honour to be here this evening. Thank you Brenda (Elliott) for your kind introduction.

On behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus I want to congratulate the organizers of this event and to all of you in attendance.

John is doing well in 2P debt, etc.

We are living in interesting times in the province of Ontario. After 2 years of Liberal government in Ontario, the public is becoming less and less confident in their ability to govern and live up to their promises. Indeed they have now broken more than 50 promises. The most important broken promise is “I won’t raise your taxes nor will I lower them”. They now have a new health tax, 2.4 billion and an additional \$2000 more in taxes is being collected for every family in the province.

Their recent Throne Speech spoke to their broken promises, lack of accountability and refusal to take responsibility for issues of concern to people in the province.

Let’s look at the Throne Speech. It contained 60 recycled, unfulfilled promises from the past and eight new promises. Most of the new promises involved setting up new bureaucracy or PR gimmicks.

They did not address the issues of concern to Ontarians such as higher electricity rates, higher taxes and fees, higher property taxes, or how they now pay for chiropractors, eye exams or physiotherapy - three health services that have been delisted. Ontarians are paying more but getting less.

So what might have been in the Throne Speech? Let’s start with energy rebates. The Liberal government has \$500 million sitting in its coffers as energy rebates that are owed to the people for a year that ended quite a few months ago.

Let’s look at the Premier’s response to higher property assessments. Despite the fact that people are seeing their assessments go up 40, 50, 60 or even 100% and may have to sell their homes and cottages, Premier McGuinty says he won’t deal with it because I quote, “He didn’t run on it”.

Well I ask the Premier, did he run on the health tax? Or did he run on delisting chiropractors, eye exams or physiotherapy? No, N-O.

The other issue without a plan is garbage. The U.S. may turn back our garbage at the border within 90 days. Yet this government is totally unprepared, has no plan, nor have they made an effort to develop one during the past two years.

This is also a government that is demonstrating a complete lack of respect for the people like you who pay the taxes. They have adopted the same old Liberal tax and spend approach. Hardworking families are now paying \$200 more in additional taxes each year. The provincial deficit will have increased by 13.8 billion at the end of their term.

Businesses are paying more for WSIB.

Instead of taking action to grow the economy, their actions are making this province less competitive. Ontario has lost 43 000 manufacturing jobs this year. As well, Ontario's unemployment rate exceeded the national average for five months this year and for the first time since the end of WWII.

These are disturbing numbers. Ontario had traditionally been the economic engine of the country and we are now starting to fall behind.

Yet the Throne Speech failed to address a commitment to the economy or to create an environment where jobs can be created.

It lacked a commitment to health care despite the need for more doctors, nurses and a reduction in wait times. Indeed this is the government who earlier this year spent \$91 million to fire almost 800 nurses. This is the government where wait times are increasing.

It was a Throne Speech that announced for the eighth time that we would have 1000 more police officers in our streets. The truth is that more than two years into their mandate there is not one new police officer in any community in this province.

It was a Throne Speech with a novelty item, a money-back guarantee in birth certificates if they don't deliver on time. What they didn't tell us was in the fine print when we went online and learned that you had to be eight years old or younger to get the guaranteed certificate.

But let's go back to the first Throne Speech. It committed to not raising taxes; that was ignored and the Liberals brought in the biggest personal tax increase in Ontario's history. It vilified private-public partnerships for new hospitals; now the Liberals embrace them with both arms. The first Throne Speech promised to provide a stable, reliable electricity supply, a supply that is now more in jeopardy than ever

before. The first Throne Speech promised answers to youth violence and traffic gridlock and yet the only voice speaking up for Ontarians on these two issues, among others, is the PC caucus.

Thus we have seen during the past two years a government unwilling to make tough decisions, a government that breaks its promises, a government that continues to tax and spend and a government and a government without a vision or plan.

And what do we offer? A new leader, John Tory, who is principled, pragmatic, hardworking and honest, smart and decent.

A record in government, while not perfect, did keep its words and had the courage to confront problems that previous governments had swept under the carpet.

An experienced caucus.

And thousands of members and volunteers, just like you who believe in our party, its values and principles and will help us develop our policy for October 4, 2007.

A party that recognizes the need to grow the economy.

So as we move towards 2007, I thank you for your support today and in the past and ask for your support in the future. I encourage you to get involved in order that this province can once again become the economic engine of Canada.

Thank you for being here tonight.