



MEMBER BULLETIN

September 14, 2016

Ontario Throne Speech: Government Priorities leading into 2018

On September 12, the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario Elizabeth Dowdeswell delivered a Speech from the Throne (Speech) on behalf of the provincial government to launch the Fall legislative session. The Speech provided the Premier Kathleen Wynne with the opportunity to “reboot” her government’s priorities, as the legislature was temporarily prorogued for a half-day in advance of the speech. This prorogation wipes the legislative slate clean, meaning that all Bills that were being reviewed and considered prior to the summer have now been dropped and will have to be re-introduced and start the process over again if they are to be passed. The move was made in an effort to set a clear set of priorities and deliverables for the government leading into the next provincial election in 2018.

A number of new priorities were announced as part of the Speech, including: a reduction in hydro rates by removing the 8% provincial portion of HST from hydro bills for up to five million Ontario families and businesses (coming at a cost of \$1 billion in annual lost revenue for the province); an increase in the number of daycare spots in the province by up to 100,000 (though not to be fully implemented until 2022); and, a continued pledge to balance the provincial Budget in 2017-18.

The Speech re-iterated a number of long-held positions on the infrastructure file, including the continued investment in transportation and healthcare infrastructure in 2017. The Speech also noted that the federal intake for the recently announced Clean Water and Wastewater Fund would be launched in the very near future, which will add an additional \$560 million into state-of-good-repair projects for water and wastewater infrastructure across the province.

Comment

While it was billed as a “fresh start” for the government, the Speech lacked a lot of substantive changes from the long-held Liberal positions under Premier Wynne, aside from the hydro rate reductions. On the infrastructure file, priorities will remain the same, while a number of government reviews and consultations are wrapping up on future investment criteria around asset management, long-term planning, and climate resiliency.

If you have any questions about the Speech from the Throne, please contact Patrick McManus (patrick.mcmanus@oswca.org or 905-629-7766 ext. 222).