

# 'Spending' and 'waste' in budget, MPP Tory says

MP John Tory, leader of the Progressive Conservatives, commented on the provincial budget during a speech at the Economic Club of Toronto Friday morning.

"When commenting on the budget, the first temptation is to focus exclusively on the dollars and cents. Programs and taxes. Spending and waste.

"But budgets are more than about the math. They present the most compelling opportunity for any government to outline its vision for the province – and the clearest litmus test – for whether a given government is really prepared to lead.

"... here we stand in 2007 and it is clear Ontario is slipping on Dalton McGuinty's watch.

"In RBC's last forecast, released this past January, they reported that our economic growth was dead last in Canada – trailing the second last province – PEI – by over half a percentage point.

"The 30,000 Ontarians who fled our province to Alberta last year – they know we are slipping under Dalton McGuinty as well. In fact, if it wasn't for the arrival of new Canadians – Ontario's population would have actually declined last year.

"And I can tell you with no shred of doubt that the 120,000 Ontarians who lost manufacturing jobs since the start of 2005 know that we have been falling behind during Dalton McGuinty's time.

"The fact remains that, on his watch, thousands of jobs are being lost and our growth rates lag the rest of Canada. Parents are seriously worried – not without cause – that their children will grow up in a province that just does not have it as good as what we have today.

"Now the news is not all doom and gloom. The fact is with some real planning, with some real accountability, with some real leadership and discipline in how government manages and spends our tax dollars, Ontario can once again be that big engine that is attracting talent from all corners of Canada and around the world. But that won't happen by accident and it won't happen with the kind of weak, indecisive leadership we have seen from Dalton McGuinty.

"In the ideal situation, the 2007 budget would have been an opportunity for Mr. McGuinty's government to finally pull up its socks, roll up its sleeves, and get to work."

Things missing from the budget, according to Tory, included tax breaks for hardworking taxpayers. "Not even the hint of a tax break on the punishing 'health' tax. No real, long-term, funded plan for traffic and transit. No relief from crowded hospital emergency rooms. More students than ever in portables.

"If you're one of those ordinary, hardworking taxpayers in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, you're expected to just live with it. And live

with the fact that Dalton McGuinty will, this year, spend \$22.4 billion more of your money than when he came to office, with virtually no results to show for it.

"There is no real long-term infrastructure plan. Municipalities are still forced to plan on an ad hoc basis.

"As I mentioned earlier, since he was elected Dalton McGuinty has managed to ramp up spending by more than \$22 billion. That's a staggering amount any way you slice it. It amounts to more than \$4,500 for every household in this province.

"Dalton McGuinty has led a charmed existence when it comes to revenues. The latest windfall from the federal government is just the most recent contributor to the more than \$10 billion he has received in unanticipated revenues.

"Dalton McGuinty has already overspent his original class size budget and yet caps are still not fully in place. And once again the budget contained no measures to account for Mr.

McGuinty's broken coal plant promise and we are all left breathing dirtier air.

"People waiting years for knee replacement surgery hear Dalton McGuinty say he won't even consider letting a private clinic end the pain and clear the waiting lists – even though patients they would use public funds and patients would only pay with their OHIP cards.

"It is fair for you, and all Ontarians to ask me, John what would you do differently?" This is, obviously an election year. Mr. McGuinty's buffet of politically laden spending is the clearest sign yet of that. But people deserve certainty as to some of what we will do as the next government of Ontario

"First thing's first. We would begin to eliminate the health tax that is causing so much hardship, particularly to Ontario's poorest workers. It's a broken promise tax and it's a regressive tax. With the budget supposedly balanced – with big surpluses piling up in the coming years, Dalton McGuinty

should have started to phase the health tax out yesterday – if not earlier – he has no excuse for not getting on with it.

"We would also take real action to protect homeowners from the assessment crisis. A couple of weeks ago we released our own plan for homeowners, and I was interested to see how the McGuinty scheme stacks up.

"Under our plan – no homeowner would receive a year-to-year increase in assessments higher than 5%, for as long as they or their spouse owned their home. We would also institute reverse onus – and put the burden of proof on MPAC in the event of the appeal.

"We would have a real plan for efficiency. The 07-08 budget boasts about all the money it has saved – through efficiency – but nowhere – nowhere are these savings broken out. We get stonewalled when we've asked. A mere 1% increase in government efficiency would result in \$800 million in savings – and is certainly very achievable without

compromising any public services. We will find these savings and more by asking questions Dalton McGuinty won't ask and making decisions Dalton McGuinty won't make.

"Even the small steps forward this budget did take – such as the end to GTA pooling and uploading of the Business Education Tax – end up only making winners of some municipalities – and big losers out of others. As I said earlier, Toronto, with its unique needs is basically forgotten about and taken for granted.

"We would produce – and work with other governments and partners to secure funding for a practical, integrated long-term roads and transit plan – not just the McGuinty one-off cheque after one-off cheque approach that quite frankly makes long-term planning impossible.

"People will have to take stock of who they think is up to providing that leadership so we can restore Ontario to a position of leadership."

## Thank You!

To my friends, neighbours and relatives who kept my birthday party a surprise. Your generosity resulted in donations of \$530.00 (in lieu of gifts) to the Marsville Hall Fund. Great Music by Marion's Country Band! and the Marsville Chorus! A special thank you to Barbara, Brenda and Laura for putting it together.

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