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KEEP PROMISING

1996: "A Year of Promises Kept"

It is difficult in a few short paragraphs to summarize all of the work which has transpired over the past twelve months. We continue to deliver what we promised, even in the face of vocal opposition. I thought it would be important to bring you up to date on some of the issues that you have told me are your priorities.

The Economy

We promised to create hundreds of thousands of jobs, deliver tax relief, eliminate the deficit and improve the overall shape of Ontario's economy. Here are the results so far.

In July and August the Ontario economy created 45,000 net new jobs. This followed the first phase of the tax cut and constituted the biggest growth in employment since 1989. This brought the total number of jobs created since June 1995 to an estimated 127,000. Provincial income tax relief was delivered for the first time in forty years on July 1, 1996 when your provincial tax rate was reduced from 58% to 54%. A further reduction was implemented on January 1, 1997 which lowered the Ontario rate to 49% of the basic federal tax. When fully implemented, 91% of Ontario taxpayers will see their tax rates fall by 30% and 635,000 low-income Ontarians will pay no tax at all. The 1996 Budget Statement reported that the government was on track to balancing the budget by the year 2000-2001. In fact, the projected deficit for next year is \$6.6 billion, a reduction of more than 40% since our government took office in 1995. With the climate in Ontario ripe for growth, the government is promoting Ontario through major initiatives such as "Market Ontario". This project is an effort to ensure that by the year 2000, investors recognize Ontario as a preferred investment location in North America and an excellent place to do business and create jobs.

Quality Health

We promised that we would protect the health care budget at \$17.4 billion and look towards building a system that could serve the needs of a changing demographic. In effect, build a modern health care system for the next millennium. Here are some highlights. We have not only protected the health

care budget but increased it to \$17.7 billion. The redistribution of health care funds within the system have allowed us to accomplish some important measures in addressing future health care needs.

For instance:

- 275 prescription drugs have been added to the Ontario Drug Benefit formulary for seniors and others who rely on this program.

- \$25 million in additional funds given to 18 hospitals in fast growing communities to help cope with population growth.

- Funding for cardiac surgeries has been increased so that more surgeries are performed and waiting lists reduced.

- Province wide measles vaccination and other programs for pneumonical conditions and Hepatitis B have been introduced for 1996-97.

- \$7.3 million is committed over the next five years for a nurse practitioner program.

Looking at long term solutions, prevention and redistributing our health care resources where they are most needed will guide the philosophy of future changes in health care in Ontario.

Excellence in Education

We promised to reform Ontario's education system and equip the next generation of students with the tools necessary to acquire high-paying, productive jobs in an increasingly competitive global marketplace. We have made some adjustments which we believe will go a long way in creating a modern education system for the province. Some of the highlights are listed below:

- A new rigorous and demanding curriculum is being implemented that will focus on the basics. Curriculum standards will be clear, measurable and comprehensive in all grades.

- We are developing a more focused and relevant four-year program for high school students.

- Funding for innovative uses of technology in the classroom has been doubled to \$40 million and increased student access to distance education and the Internet.

- Created the independent, self funding College of Teachers which will establish standards of practice for teachers meaning more accountability.

- Ontario will be the first province in Canada to introduce comprehensive testing. This measure will let parents know what their children are being taught and how well they're learning.

- Schools across the province have been encouraged to implement their own school councils to provide grassroots advice to our government.

The issues of school board governance and education funding will be settled this year. They are, of course, critical issues in addressing the overall health of our education system. Protecting funding for the classroom will be a high priority in any decisions made.

Safer Communities

We promised to provide an atmosphere ensuring public safety in our streets and in our homes. We have made significant steps towards improving public safety and reforming our system of justice and will continue to do so. Some of the highlights are:

- tougher standards regarding Ontario Board of Parole decisions about releasing violent offenders into the community. For the first time ever, the Board is denying parole more often than it grants parole.

- electronic monitoring as a cost-efficient way to monitor nonviolent offenders in the community.

- modernizing our correctional facilities and replacing older and inefficient jails with a more cost-efficient system of five larger, state of the art institutions. This initiative will reduce the daily cost of keeping a prisoner from \$124 per day to about \$75, and save taxpayers \$75 to \$80 million a year once it's up and running.

- \$1.92 million to expand the Victim Crisis Assistance and Referral Service (VCARS); and \$5.2 million towards expansion of the DNA crime lab at the Center of Forensic Sciences, making it one of the best in North America.

There are many other initiatives that we have pursued throughout the course of 1996. If you need information on any government program please drop me a line and my staff will assist you.

Workfare Update

Between 1985-1994, welfare caseloads had increased an average of 180%. The cost of the system increased five times from \$1.3B to \$6.8B. By 1995, 12.7% of Ontarians were on welfare, we had the highest per capita welfare rates in the country, our welfare system was in crisis.

In 1995, I campaigned on our promise to bring about fundamental reform of our welfare system including reducing welfare rates by 21.6%, tightening eligibility with regard to young people, common law relationships, voluntary quitters and those fired with cause, creating a tougher Fraud Control Unit, and implementing a Welfare Fraud Hotline. The results of our measures thus far have seen a 27.7% reduction in welfare caseloads. A survey contracted by the Ministry of Community and Social Services found that, of those who had left the system, 61.9% found full-time work, part-time work, or a better job.

Our workfare program is not only about numbers, it represents fundamental reform. It is a plan focused toward helping those trapped in the system and giving them the hope and support they need in order to re-enter society as self-sufficient tax paying citizens.

There are three components to Workfare: Employment Supports,



January tax cut in... and strong creation... Whether you receive from create a sta...

YOUR THOUGHTS, COMMENTS, IMPORTANT TO ME. PLEASE

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