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Ontario Throne Speech: no surprises

On Thursday, July 12, Lt. Gov. Elizabeth Dowdeswell delivered new Premier Doug Ford's Progressive Conservative (PC) government's first speech from the throne. There were few surprises as the speech stuck to priorities that the PC's outlined during their election campaign. It was very high level, even for a throne speech, and focused heavily on pocketbook issues for taxpayers and businesses, with limited details on how these will be implemented.

An often repeated refrain was on reversing Liberal policy, and changing the relationship between the people of Ontario and the government. A number of times during the speech, public institutions, such as health care and education, were mentioned as needing to have changes.

A key theme of the speech was that that Ontario's finances are in a dangerous state; however very little details were provided about what the PC's will do going forward, other than to declare the province is "open for business". The government did commit to an auditing process into every budget line of the government, and to eventually return Ontario to a balanced budget.

The ongoing NAFTA negotiations were mentioned as the willingness to work with the Federal Liberal government was reaffirmed, including the need to engage directly with Americans.

The government further committed to key election promises: scrapping the cap-and-trade carbon tax, reversing math and sex-ed curriculums, ending green energy contracts, and potentially upgrading nuclear power.

There were six immediate government priorities for this session; yet none directly focused on the technology sector. These included:

- Ending the ongoing labour dispute at York University.
- Repealing the legislative framework for Ontario's cap-and-trade program.
- Cancellation of wind projects.
- Launching a line-by-line audit of all government spending.
- Creating 15,000 new health care beds over the next five years, and a \$3.8M investment in mental health and addictions.
- Expanding the sale of beer and wine to convenience stores, grocery stores, and big box.

ITAC has already reached out to both Premier Ford and his new cabinet, and will continue to keep our members apprised of any key meetings around increasing awareness of the importance of the ICT sector on the provincial and national economy.