

# Pre-Budget Consultations

February 9, 2016

Morrisburg, ON – Cornwall, ON

## Summary of Recommendations

- Agriculture & Food
  - Focus on evidence-based decision making, especially in policy areas that generate high levels of public interest such as pollinator protection
  - Reduce the administrative and regulatory burden on farming in order to allow farmers to focus their time, labour and other resources on their business.
- Attorney-General
  - Enact immediate reforms to Joint and Several Liability, as municipalities are finding it increasingly difficult to provide the same level of service in light of escalating insurance costs
  - Address the culture of litigation taking hold in the Province that is driving up insurance costs and impairing the efficient delivery of public services; examples include the increased frequency of Hwy 401 closures when the situation could previously be managed without a closure.
- Community Safety and Correctional Services
  - Invest in greater numbers of police officers in the community in order to tackle motoring offences, especially distracted driving
- Children & Youth Services
  - Continue implementing the recommendation of the Cornwall Inquiry suggesting the provision of a Child Advocacy Centre in Cornwall, reinforced by Recommendation 19 of the Baldwin Inquiry by providing child and youth advocacy centres such as Koala Place in Cornwall with annualized, reliable operating funding when federal start-up program funding expires
  - Annual funding requirement for Koala Place is approximately \$200,000
- Education
  - Approach the school board amalgamation issue from the perspective of avoiding unnecessary monetary and environmental costs, such as those arising from the need to provide more school bus services
  - Re-evaluate the role of organized labour and union officers in school relationships that used to be more collegial and informal
  - Consider implementing charter school in Ontario

- Energy
  - Abolish subsidies and above-market contract rates for renewable sources, or at the very least bring the over-payment down to the US average in order to maintain some measure of competitiveness
  - Do not approve any further renewable projects under the auspices of the Green Energy Act
  - Buy back any approved but not-yet-connected renewable project in order to cut the long-term cost to the ratepayer
  - Evaluate other countries' experiences with government-assisted green energy development and cease subsidies if other jurisdictions pull away from similar policies
  - Review the oversight and regulatory framework of gasoline pricing in Ontario
- Environment
  - Work with municipalities to undertake major projects designed to prevent infrastructure problems down the line
  - In particular, prioritize shoreline preservation projects involving breakwaters that would help preserve river and lake shores and any roadways close to them such as Hwy 401.
  - Strengthen the relationship between local development and conservation, especially the preservation of groundwater and wetland resources
- Finance
  - Introduce a favorable municipal assessment and taxation framework for museums and the properties hosting them, including but not limited to smaller private museums that share premises with private owners.
  - Distribute gas tax revenue fairly to all municipalities so that the funds can be re-invested in the community
  - Address the challenge of increases to the cost of living eating away increases in pensioners' benefits
  - Guarantee appropriate levels of investment return for ORPP funds and lock the funds into place rather than use them to cover spending projects
- Government & Consumer Services
  - Reduce the administrative burden on volunteers, including volunteer boards of small organizations such as local cemeteries
  - Tackle the increasingly expensive consulting culture in Government by increasing public consultation initiatives and tapping into expert knowledge available in local communities
- Infrastructure
  - Allocate infrastructure funding to municipalities without earmarking it for specific projects pre-approved in Toronto, in order to allow municipalities to proceed with major necessary local projects
  - Ease the process of accounting for and tracking the expenditure of earmarked gas tax and infrastructure funding, as the current system is a strain on municipal staff resources
  - Work with the private sector in areas such as rural telecom service delivery to ensure public money is not spent where private operators are already willing to provide equipment, infrastructure and service
  - Prioritize the disposal of closed Ontario Tourist Information Centres and other surplus government properties through sales or leases to individuals and organizations who have a use for the premises

- Health
  - Commit to bringing a speech pathologist to Cornwall, as today's situation requiring the specialist's travel from Winchester is not efficient.
  - Prevent hours and service cuts to local health providers
  - Improve local delivery of health programs in rural Ontario, especially for those who can't travel to major centres such as Cornwall
  - Build extra Long-Term Care bed capacity in Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, rather than the general Champlain LHIN area
  - Regulate PSWs using the already established practices of the Ontario Personal Support Workers Association
  - Establish a clear and accountable background screening and discipline process for all Personal Support Workers
  - Increase the system's ability to hire more Personal Support Workers in order to relieve currently excessive PSW workloads that are causing stress and staff burnout. Such initiatives will enhance patient safety and the quality of care provided.
  - Provide rural residents with either convenient and accessible publicly-funded medical transportation services, or create a mileage allowance for those who need to travel to other cities for medical appointments.
  - Increase financial supports for the purchase of hearing aids of better quality and durability; other provinces such as Quebec have successful programs to that effect.
  - Break down administrative barriers that make it difficult for local LHINs and CCACs to provide care and follow-up to patients whose treatment took place outside of their local LHIN's area
  - Ensure program funding is distributed fairly and equitably among Ontario's regions and municipalities
  - Focus on bringing down wait times for specialist appointments and care
  - Tackle waste across Government in order to focus on funding the delivery of front-line public services
- Tourism, Culture & Sport
  - Ensure the St Lawrence Parks Commission plays a stronger role in directing visitors to local businesses in order to share the benefits of tourism with local municipalities, businesses and residents.
  - Find a productive use for vacant SLPC land at Upper Canada Village, such as establishing fairgrounds or a revenue-generating initiative.
  - Give local municipalities and Chambers of Commerce the tools and ability to promote local tourism, independently of whether the area is deemed by the Ministry to be a "destination"
  - Re-open Tourist Information Centres, regardless of a region's "destination" designation, or take steps to immediately hand over their operation to willing local organizations and municipalities.
  - Reduce annual Tourism-Oriented Destination Signage program fees
  - Ensure TODS clients are charged fairly and fees are pro-rated in case of temporary sign displacement, removal or coverage
  - Work with the agriculture industry to facilitate the start-up and development of agri-tourism in Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry

- **Transportation**
  - Prioritize improvements on Highway 138, as the current roadway's state and traffic is diverting drivers to other North-South county roads
  - Improve the snow removal and winter maintenance on Ontario's highways, as any reduction in service is a tax increase in disguise due to additional cost of accidents, delays, liability and lost productivity.
  - Bring back local delivery in Cornwall and the surrounding areas of the driver functional assessment program for drivers who had suffered a stroke
  - Address the need of drivers who are awaiting a functional assessment and re-testing to practice their skills before being subject to a driving test on unfamiliar and intimidating roads in Ottawa, where the program is currently delivered
  - Reduce the \$800 cost of the functional assessment program
- **Hydro One**
  - The utility is still a monopoly provider of electricity in many areas of the Province – as a monopolist it should be subject to scrutiny by the public and independent officers of the Legislature
- **Ontario Power Generation**
  - Expedite the transfer of unused OPG lands on the shoreline of the St Lawrence River through initiatives such as aggregating parcels into already existing private properties or converting them to designated parklands.
- **Federal**
  - Re-evaluate CPP asset investment policy in order to improve investment returns, which in turn can bring an increase in benefits
  - Improve food import screening by providing more staff, facilities and equipment for examining produce entering the country