

MINISTER PHILLIPS REMARKS  
AT OEA SPEAKERSERIES ON DECEMBER 11, 2018

I want to express my appreciation to the Ontario Energy Association for providing this forum ... and for being a strong advocate for an industry that is at the heart of creating a healthy, prosperous future for our province.

It's only been a few months since I was last here, however so much has happened in the meantime.

Two weeks ago, I had the honour of introducing our government's new plan for preserving and protecting our environment for future generations.

Our Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan will protect our air, land and water, reduce litter and waste, do our share to reduce greenhouse gasses and help communities prepare for climate change.

And, importantly, we will do so without imposing a carbon tax, or otherwise making life unaffordable for Ontario families and businesses.

It's a plan that represents a clean break from the status quo. It's a plan that balances a healthy environment with a healthy economy. And, it's a plan that our people deserve.

You'll recall last time I spoke of how Premier Ford and our Government was elected on our commitment to improve affordability for families, increase our competitiveness, and restore balance to our province.

It is these three principles that continue to guide the decisions we make.

People in Ontario understand the link between environmental health and economic growth ... and they know these goals are not mutually exclusive.

As Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks – having heard from many people on this topic, especially during the development of our new environment plan – I can tell you: Ontarians are passionate about the environment.

This passion is borne out by the way they've always embraced environmental causes.

We've been well ahead of the curve on climate action, with our companies in the energy sector leading the way.

In signing onto the Paris accord, Canada pledged to decrease greenhouse gas emissions from 2005 levels -- by 30 per cent --before 2030.

Since 2005, while the rest of Canada saw emissions rise, the people of Ontario reduced their emissions by 22 per cent.

Most of Canada's national progress towards the 2030 Paris accord targets is attributable to just one province -- Our province...and Ontario is now within 8 per cent of reaching this ambitious target.

But the people of our province have made significant sacrifices in order to get here.

For example the elimination of coal continues to cost the average Ontario household \$400 annually, and an extra \$5000 for small businesses.

This is a heavy price that many people can't afford to pay.

This is why our government has moved away from approaches that penalize our people and saddle our businesses with burdensome taxes such as the previous government's ineffective cap-and-trade program.

This is also why we continue our fight, to protect the people of Ontario from the federal government's plan to impose a job-killing carbon tax.

Last week, I met again with my federal counterpart, Minister McKenna.

We identified a number of items that we can partner on, which include our shared commitment to reducing plastic waste, protections for our endangered species and preserving our great lakes and waterways.

Unfortunately, Minister McKenna still refuses to acknowledge the merits of any plan to address climate change that does not impose a carbon tax.

She continues to advocate for higher costs on the families and people of our province.

Guiding Principles

In contrast, our new plan presents a more practical, common sense approach that balances a healthy environment and a healthy economy.

This is a made-in-Ontario plan that is tailored to the specific challenges and opportunities of our province.

During the course of developing our plan, we received more than 8,000 ideas from Ontarians.

We consulted with more than 150 stakeholders from across the province, and we had a multitude of insightful discussions with global policy leaders.

This plan is informed by their experiences, their passions and their optimism that we can do better -- And today, I'd like to provide you with an overview of the actions we are proposing.

When it comes to air quality, our plan takes a targeted approach – a recognition that certain parts of the province experience greater challenges because of higher levels of pollution.

Our plan will focus on those areas that face continuing air pollution from transportation, industry and other sources.

We also want to reduce emissions from the heaviest polluters on our roads, which we will do through design changes to our heavy-duty vehicle emissions testing program.

The plan also focuses on water conservation, sustainability and security, updating Ontario's Great Lakes Strategy, and improving reporting with transparent, real-time monitoring of waste and stormwater.

Our plan calls for reducing plastic litter, phosphorus that causes excess algae, salt in waterways, and focusing on the needs of our most vulnerable air and watersheds.

With respect to reducing waste and litter, we will work with municipalities to clean up our communities by expanding organic waste collection in cities and urban areas and reducing plastic waste.

Right now, Ontario diverts just under 30 per cent of waste from landfill ... a rate we've been stalled at for the last decade. Our plan will get the needle moving again by looking at increased recycling, as well as innovative ways to recover resources from waste.

We will also encourage meaningful action close to home to help people do their part in keeping our neighborhoods and parks clean.

This includes the introduction of Ontario's first ever province-wide day of action focused on cleaning up litter.

Another area our plan will address, is responsibly reusing excess soil ... and reducing barriers to redeveloping commercial or industrial lands that are no longer in use.

Our plan focuses on conserving land and preserving greenspace.

We will expand and promote access to Ontario's parks, boosting attendance in provincial parks by 10 per cent, or over one million visitors every year.

Our plan will strengthen the oversight of conservation authorities ... improve land use planning to conserve vulnerable natural areas ... and protect our natural environment from invasive species.

And, as I mentioned, our plan will do our share to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and help us prepare by improving resilience to the impacts of climate change.

Ontario's commitment is to reduce emissions by 30 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030.

This commitment aligns Ontario with Canada's target under the Paris Agreement – an agreement the Prime Minister, Minister McKenna and an array of leaders from around the globe agreed to just a few short years ago.

However as I'm sure you have heard, there has been a recent change in tone from the Prime Minister emerging during the course of the first ministers meeting last Friday.

Not even a week after announcing our plan that commits Ontario to meeting their targets, they now expect our province to do more.

What's clear is that the Prime Minister holds Ontario to a different standard, and there are different rules for different provinces.

He insists Ontario families and businesses pay more. He wants them to pay his Carbon Tax.

While they seem intent on moving the goalposts, we will maintain our commitment to doing our share and our plan lays out detailed, common sense strategies to meet the Paris targets.

With transportation remaining the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in Ontario, our plan focuses on more efficient energy use ... as well as expanding access to cleaner fuels.

We will get rid of the regulatory impediments that have been preventing companies from deploying the low-carbon refueling infrastructure necessary for increasing the uptake of low-carbon vehicles.

We will also work with the private sector to remove barriers to expanding 24/7 compressed natural gas refueling stations for trucks along the 400-series highways.

And we will keep the current existing tax exemption on natural gas as a transportation fuel – helping to reduce emissions from heavy-duty vehicles.

Another way to reduce transportation emissions is through cleaner fuels – which we will encourage through increasing the ethanol content of gasoline to 15 per cent as early as 2025 ... as well as encouraging greater use of natural gas and lower-carbon fuels for transportation.

We will also require Ontario's natural gas utilities to offer their customers voluntary renewable natural gas programs. This will give options to Ontarians who want to do more to further lower their carbon footprint.

Ontario also has natural gas conservation programs in place to conserve energy, save people money and reduce their carbon footprint.

We will work with utilities and the Ontario Energy Board to find ways to expand these programs.

Our plan emphasizes fairness – ensuring emission intensive industry is held accountable, while at the same time cutting red tape for responsible businesses and acknowledging that Ontario-based companies have to compete in global markets.

We will consult on performance standards to ensure polluters pay their fair share for their greenhouse gas emissions.

We will create The Ontario Carbon Trust, with an initial investment of \$400 Million, which will focus on reducing emissions by opening up new partnerships with the government to fund clean projects in the municipal, transportation and building retrofit sectors.

The trust will be comprised of two elements;

The first is an emissions reduction fund to support and encourage investments across the province for initiatives that reduce greenhouse gas emissions – like the New York Green Bank or British Carbon Trust.

The fund would begin with an initial investment that will leverage private sector dollars at a 4 to 1 ratio, supporting private sector investment in clean technologies.

The second tool is a reverse auction market mechanism, allowing bidders to send proposals for emissions reduction projects and compete for funding from Ontario ... based on offers that provide the lowest-cost greenhouse gas emission reductions.

These tools will unlock well over \$1 Billion of private capital to give Ontario businesses and residents new and more affordable ways to invest in energy efficiency and clean technologies.

These technologies could include electric vehicles, building retrofits, renewable energy or ways to improve manufacturing processes.

We know that Ontario's thriving private sector – including our unparalleled energy sector – has great creativity and resourcefulness.

Our environment plan and the actions I have just outlined will help us all do our part in reducing GHG emissions by facilitating best ideas while reducing regulatory burden.

Along with finding better, more efficient ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, our environment plan emphasizes resiliency and helping families and communities prepare for the effects of climate change,

We will conduct the first ever comprehensive, province-wide impact assessment – critical for planning and preparing for changes in our climate.

This will help Ontarians understand – in clear terms – how climate change is affecting our infrastructure, communities, homes and businesses.

It will give us our first clear understanding of where the province is most vulnerable – which regions and sectors are most likely to feel the greatest consequences from our changing climate.

I'm especially excited about the development of an online tool that will make this information available to the public, as well as the private sector.

This information will also help us work with communities, businesses and Indigenous communities to find solutions that enable them to become more resilient to the impacts of climate change.

Ontario's new environment plan represents a clean break from the status quo.

There is a lot of work remaining to be done.

Our first order of business is getting feedback from Ontarians.

We've placed our Made-in-Ontario environment plan on the Environmental Registry for 60-day public consultation.

I encourage everyone here to read the plan and let us know what you think.

In the coming months, we will be considering your comments ... and consulting with the public, Indigenous communities, municipalities and other groups.

We're also going to create an expert Advisory Panel on Climate Change to advise the government on implementation of our plan.

And we're going to establish a reporting process to keep the public up-to-date on our progress in putting the plan in action.

As I said earlier, Ontario's new environment plan marks a new era for environmental protection in Ontario.

It's an era where environmental challenges provide opportunities to strengthen safeguards for our air, water and land ... while creating jobs and respecting taxpayers.

We all have a responsibility to leave behind a province better than the one we inherited; not just environmentally, but financially as well.

I look forward to working with everyone here to create the healthier and more prosperous future we all want to see for this province.

Thank you.

The Honourable Rod Phillips  
Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks