

Premier Doug Ford's Remarks
2019 ROMA Conference
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Sheraton Centre Toronto

Check against delivery.

Boy, what a great crowd here. First of all, I want to thank you Allan. Thank you for that very warm welcome. It's great to be here today. I can tell you, my friends, when we were out campaigning across Ontario, my favourite time was when I went into the rural communities, when I went to northern Ontario. I remember telling our team that the people of Toronto don't realize, number one, how great Ontario is until you get out of the bubble – I call Toronto the “bubble,” by the way. You got to get out of the bubble because there's a whole life outside of Toronto. It's great, it's beautiful and – I used to say to our campaign team, I said, “Let's go talk to the real people. Let's get out into the rural communities and talk to the farmers and the folks up north.” It's great to see so many new and familiar faces, and I know that most of our Cabinet and the caucus are here. They're here to listen to our municipal partners and we are here because we recognize the importance of rural Ontario, because our rural communities are the lifeblood of Ontario – the farmers, the factory towns, the small business owners and local workers. These hard working folks put Ontario on the map. And today I want to update you on the steps we're taking to support rural communities and share what you can expect in the coming months. What we're doing to make Ontario open for business and open for jobs, what we're doing to put money back into the people's pockets instead of the government's pockets and what we're doing to support infrastructure. I heard that over and over again, my friends, when I when I travelled in the rural communities, no

matter who's winning a highway or fixing a bridge or other infrastructure projects – we're listening. Before I go into that I want to say that we're here to support each and every one of you. That's why we're here; that's why as we promised at the AMO Conference, we are consulting on a review of regional governments; that's why we're already taking action to support rural Ontario and support small municipalities across this great province.

There's one thing I can assure you, I can assure you can count on a partner in our government. My friends, I speak to hundreds of farmers, farm workers, factory workers and small business owners, and I know how hard people work in rural Ontario to pay the bills to create jobs just to make ends meet. I also hear how sick people are, sick of the red tape and the wasteful regulations. When I took office I found out there was 380,000 regulations. How do you survive on 380,000 regulations? How do businesses survive on 380,000 regulations? The most regulated area in the entire country. Barriers that make it impossible to expand businesses and create jobs. Our government is already working to make that a lot easier and more than a dozen sectors like farming, manufacturing and construction. We're working to cut red tape that duplicates federal requirements and that's one of the things we noticed is there's so much duplication between levels of government. We're cutting the red tape that just doesn't make sense. In fact, we're going to cut red tape that gets in the way of businesses by over 25 per cent and 25 per cent, my friends, is just the beginning because as I've talked to the CEO of one of the big five banks [inaudible] in my office a couple of weeks ago and said, "Doug, you know what's even better than cutting taxes? It's cutting red tape and

regulations.” We're going to make Ontario the economic engine of Confederation s rural communities can grow and expand, so they can prosper and thrive. And my friends, we've been working to put money back into the people's pockets instead of the government's pockets. We reduce prices on gas by \$0.05 a litre, the lowest they've been in years.

Matter of fact, I go around and I tell everyone, “My phone number is public. Just go online if you ever want to chat and text me the gas prices.” So, I got this little competition going on across Ontario. I think the record, and it was a couple of weeks ago, I know it has gone up since – I think the record was 84.9. So, that's pretty low. And I think the second one is 88. So, if you see anything around that range, text it to me. I always post them.

We scrap the cap-and-trade carbon tax – carbon tax is the worst tax that [inaudible] go on the backs of people, municipalities, and businesses. We scrapped the cap-and-trade to save \$260 a year in home heating costs. We've frozen fees for driving, fishing and hunting and we've acted on natural gas, especially in the farming communities. When I went around the communities, they were just continuously told me, “We need natural gas.” I know the previous government limited the private sector involvement. They tried to run a \$100 million program out of the centralised bureaucracy in Toronto, and they didn't get the job done. I can tell you, my friends, were going to get the job done.

We are – we promise to enable privately funded natural gas expansion and today, we're making it faster and easier to switch to natural gas that pay less to heat your rural homes or run your businesses. The new program will expand access to natural gas. We will expand natural gas access to as many as 78 communities and 33,000 households across rural and northern Ontario. That's just the beginning. It will also help ensure natural gas bills keep going down – more money in the pockets of families, savings for businesses and more jobs in rural Ontario.

We're also working to support world municipalities directly. Just a few days ago, Minister Yurek announced transportation funding for rural communities. Earlier this month, Minister McNaughton announced that 58 rural municipalities will receive expert help with infrastructure planning. Through Minister Elliott's hard work, we're helping to end hallway health care in rural Ontario.

With upgrades – and I'm just going to name a few, with upgrades at hospitals in places like Renfrew, Sarnia and Espanola. Again, just to name a few, but we're doing it right across the province and as I said, we're consulting. This is a government that is here to listen and that's why we've scrapped the Green Energy Act that local communities have a say on energy projects in their municipalities. Today, local communities have the final say on these important planning issues, and we heard you loud and clear on Bill 66. I always say, “We're here to listen,” and this is proof of listening. Of course, we – and I want to emphasize this, we would never approve any projects at the expense of the Greenbelt, water quality or public health. It just wouldn't happen.

But as Minister Clark recently announced, we will not proceed with Schedule 10 of the bill. We are committed to cutting red tape in a way that protects workers, that protect the environment and eliminates waste. We will make sure our legislation does exactly that. Before I conclude, I want to discuss the long standing requests from our rural members – joint and several liability.

Today, I am pleased to tell you that with my all-star ministers: Steve Clark and Attorney General Caroline Mulroney, we intend to launch a consultation to gather the facts and we will fix what needs fixing. We have heard your concerns about increasing insurance costs and the impact that these costs can have on property taxes, on municipal taxpayers and on the average Ontario resident. We heard your concerns about the liability chill, preventing everyday activities in your municipalities, like as simple as tobogganing or street hockey. We need to make sure that the vulnerable injured people are fairly compensated. We will look at this evidence and develop a solution that makes sense. The previous government over promised and once again, they broke their promises. We're not going to do that. What we promise, we're going to make sure we fulfil our promises. This will be an honest conversation, but one thing is clear: It's time we look at this. We will have more to say about the process and the timing in the very near future.

Friends, I want to thank you again for this opportunity. I know that my ministers will be talking to each and every one of you about a wide range of issues and whether it's cutting red tape to make Ontario open for business and open for jobs or putting more

money in people's pockets; whether it's supporting municipalities with infrastructure, with planning, with dealing with the costs of legalised cannabis and keeping our communities safe. I can assure you this: You can always count on having a partner in our government. I thank you and God bless you. Thank you.