

Housing, healthcare a focus for MPP following Province's Economic Statement

As the Federal government introduced its long-awaited budget this month as municipalities across Ontario began fine tuning their budgets for the year ahead, the Provincial Government released its own economic statement, which focused on economic resilience in the face of tariff challenges.

For Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy, the Fall Economic Statement was an "extension," reiterating the Government's financial goals, as outlined during the most recent Provincial campaign. With its focus on prosperity, Gallagher Murphy says she was heartened by what the updated figures mean not only for the economy writ large, but also specifically for housing and healthcare Ontario-wide.

"We want to make sure Ontario is the most competitive economy in the G7," she says. "We want to protect our capacity, make sure all of our program spending is kept at inflation levels over the next five years, and obviously protect the taxpayer. That's critical because we're very much looking to be fiscally responsible [and] we want to deliver a balanced budget by 2027-2028."

Of particular note, she says, is a rebate for the full Provincial HST bill for first-time buyers of most new homes.

"That will help people right here in Aurora and Newmarket when it comes to buying their first-time home and being in a brand-new home," she says. "Another item that is important [for the community] is we announced \$1.1 billion over three years to extend our home care services as well as the hospital-to-home program. These types of investments will ease pressures on our healthcare system, specifically at Southlake Hospital. We want to make sure that people are getting the right care at the right place, and this is definitely going to help."

At the heart of the document, however, is business and making sure they are resilient in the face of tariffs and other challenges.

The Ontario Made Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit is key on this front, she says, along with the Protect Ontario Financing Program, which she says will benefit businesses here at home.

"It's about really ensuring that businesses who are looking to retool, who are looking to innovate, how can they bring their product to a new market, inter-provincial as well, because we can't be so reliant on the U.S. I'm very excited about three businesses who are taking advantage of this. One of them, and I don't want to give too much away, it's in the life sciences sector. We're very much looking to help business, not just the auto sector and manufacturing, but also when it comes to life sciences and innovations.

"It really is about protecting our businesses, because if we can help protect them, we're protecting our workers. Workers can stay on the job and that's important right now with what's going on in our economy, being hit with these U.S. tariffs and what's actually happening with some of these businesses because, trust me, I do get phone calls from businesses. I've made it a point of making sure that I'm connecting with our businesses here locally so I can understand what they're going through and what can we do as a government. That's why this fall economic statement, by adding these different funds to help small and medium-sized businesses, this is definitely going to benefit companies in my great riding."

While she points to many positives in the Fall Economic Statement, one area MPP Gallagher Murphy says she would like to see more work done around is related to the HST rebate.

"A comment on my social media was from a resident who said, 'As far as the HST on new homes, what about other types of homes?' I read that and thought, 'Okay, good point.' I'm not too sure what we can do with it, but I'm more than happy to look further into it."

Housing will also be a focus for the MPP this week as the Ontario Legislature debates a Private Members Motion she tabled last month on private communal wastewater systems for small and rural municipalities, including those found here in York Region.

Wastewater challenges in the northern section of York Region have long been getting in the way of housing, and Gallagher Murphy says this matter, which would look at how Ontario can "utilize modular community wastewater treatment systems" to create and build small hamlets of homes "would be a step in the right direction."

"If we're looking at how do we get homes, and this could include condominiums or rentals, how can we bring down the cost while, at the same time, building faster? When you look around, there's a lot of builders who can't really build now, and there's a reason for that," she says. "I'm really happy to say I have the support of both the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and the Ministry of the Environment."

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