

VIEW FROM QUEEN'S PARK: Prorogation, Go Transit, Economy and more

By Chris Ballard, MPP
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Proroguing the Government

What a busy and exciting summer it has been. It's been great to be out in our community meeting residents, enjoying festivals, opening businesses and getting caught up with neighbours.

Children are back in school and the provincial legislature is back, too.

Last week the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario prorogued the legislature at the request of the Premier. No legislative time was lost, as we opened parliament right on schedule. Proroguing gives government the opportunity to use a speech from the throne to outline what its plans will be for the coming session of the legislature.

The speech from the throne Monday provided an update and an outline of our economic plan to Build Ontario Up. Premier Wynne has said the government will reintroduce all the government bills that were before the legislature prior to prorogation, so that debate on them can continue.

The government also plans to reintroduce the election finance reform legislation with the amendments agreed to at the committee stage.

I look forward to continuing to serve the residents of Newmarket-Aurora in the coming years. Providing a strong voice for your issues at Queen's Park remains first on my agenda.

GO Transit

In keeping with our government's promise to vastly improve GO Train service, construction started this week on a pedestrian tunnel at the Aurora GO Station. This is necessary so that GO can install a double track from Union Station to Aurora.

Double tracking allows for the coming all-day, two way GO Train service from Aurora to Union Station. Construction will take place for the most part from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. during the week. However, there will be a period of four continuous weekends with work beginning Friday at 9 p.m. and continuing until Monday at 4 a.m. (55 hours) during this fall/winter.

Those living near the station will hear construction vehicles, including drill rigs, excavators and concrete trucks. When evening or overnight work is being conducted, residents can expect to see lights, used to ensure safe working conditions. We are assured by GO that the lights will not be pointed at homes.

Overnight construction is necessary because some work cannot be completed for safety reasons during the day. There will be some station impacts due to construction; however Metrolinx has said there will be no service impacts.

During construction Metrolinx has secured an overflow parking lot at Our Lady of Grace Church, located at 15347 Yonge St. in Aurora. Metrolinx is encouraging you to utilize its new carpool program as well as the biking routes and local transit to meet your trains. You can find additional information at www.gotransit.com under Construction Updates.

August Job Numbers

Job numbers in August were showing a positive increase, employment in Ontario increased by 10,500 jobs across a number of sectors. Ontario has gained 37,200 jobs since this time last year, with an increase in youth employment by 5,800. The jobs created in the past year are mainly full-time in above average wage industries.

While the national unemployment rate is 7 per cent, Ontario has been lower than the national average for the past 16 months, and this month registered 6.7 per cent in August.

Job creation and the economy are part of the government's plan to build Ontario up. The plan includes making investments in infrastructure, hospitals, schools, roads and bridges.

Small Business

I was asked to be part of the Aurora Business Network email initiative being distributed by the Aurora Chamber of Commerce to local business. Starting a personal business is something I understand. More than 25 years ago my wife Audrey and I had started our own public affairs company after many years of working in the news media and managing public affairs for companies.

It was one of the scariest decisions I've made ? yet one of the best. The freedom that comes with being the ?captain? of your own fate was often tempered by the fact that each client was a demanding boss, and that I was the last person to be paid.

It could be stressful, but looking back I wouldn't change a thing. Starting or growing your small business can be a daunting task, especially if you don't know where to go for help. The government of Ontario is making it easier for entrepreneurs to start their business and make it a success. Whether it's a traditional business or an internet start-up, we're committed to our promise to Build Ontario Up ? and that starts with helping small business.

The Ministry of Economic Development and Growth website, accessible through www.ontario.ca, is an invaluable resource for small business owners and would-be entrepreneurs. There's advice, support and information on government programs and regulations. In addition to resources for traditional business, the website includes resources regarding your e-business.

Look for the Aurora Business Network email or sign up at the Aurora Chamber of Commerce website.

As always, I invite you to contact me on any issue. Please call my community office at 905-750-0019, or visit my website at www.ChrisBallardMPP.ca. My email is: cballard.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org. I look forward to hearing from you.