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Reducing Ontario's debt must be tackled, says Hudak

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[Ontario Progressive Conservative](#) leader Tim Hudak says the throne speech by new Liberal Premier Kathleen Wynne must confront the province's debt and job crisis in order to gain PC support.

"I'll support a serious, comprehensive plan to address what is the biggest debt and jobs crisis in our lifetime," he said, speaking at the recent [Ontario Road Builders' Association](#) (ORBA) 86th annual convention.

He says he is worried about what he has heard so far.

"If the new premier thinks the path forward is continued over spending, anti-job ideas like the College of Trades, more red tape, well, that's going to take us further down the wrong track."

As part of his vision for Ontario, Hudak said he would shrink the size of cabinet to 16. One PC white paper issued last year proposed putting the Ministry of Infrastructure with the Ministry of Finance. At the ORBA convention, Hudak said he is open to different cabinet designs.

Also at ORBA's annual meeting:
[A crisis can be a positive growth experience, says ORBA speaker](#)

"I'll make sure that whatever minister is in charge of infrastructure realizes that we need to build infrastructure that's going to create the next jobs<0x2026>I want to see us investing in highways again so goods get to market," he said.

He wants a cabinet focused on balancing the books and creating jobs again.

"I'm open to the path, but I will bring us down to 16."

Hudak said the government needs to lower taxes so businesses can invest and create jobs in Ontario.

"With tax relief comes economic growth, more people working again and more revenue coming into our treasury. It means more businesses investing in equipment and innovation," he told the audience.

"Cutting taxes on businesses that create jobs is a core part of our comprehensive plan."

Gridlock in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) has become an economic burden and Hudak said there are currently too many hands at the wheel to efficiently solve the problem.

"Nothing gets done, but one thing gets done, there's a brand new transit plan that gets done every six months and goes on a shelf somewhere when the next one comes."

He said it's important to balance subways, light rail transit, bus routes and highways.

He also said public-private partnerships will be one option moving forward.

"When the TTC does their own tunnel, they do it for about three, four times the cost of what they do in the

private sector. You get a lot more miles done if you involve the private sector that way.”

He addressed new revenue tools and alluded to the recently released “**Financing Roads and Public Transit in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area**” report from the **Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario** which calls for road pricing and highway tolls, among some of the ways to generate new funds for transportation infrastructure.

He said he is fine with tolling new highways or creating tolled express lanes.

“But this notion of throwing down tolls on highways that we’ve already paid for simply punishes drivers and who knows where that money is going. People already paid a lot in taxes.”

The Liberals’ throne speech was delivered on Feb. 19, as the Ontario Legislature reconvenes after months of prorogation.