

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION LEADER ANDREA HORWATH  
REMARKS TO AMO  
OTTWA | MONDAY AUG. 19, 2019 | 2 P.M.

Hello everyone! Bonjour tout le monde! I'm so happy to be here with all of you today.

Thank you Mayor Jamie McGarvey for the very kind introduction,

I want to start by acknowledging that we are gathered today on the unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishnaabeg people. Together, let's renew our commitment as Ontarians, to working hand in hand with indigenous peoples to protect our land, water and air for centuries to come as they have for centuries past as part of our commitment to true and meaningful reconciliation.

It is great to be back at AMO! I am so glad to see so many friends and familiar faces. There is no level of government whose work is closer to everyday Ontario families than municipalities. And you help our communities thrive.

So, thank you Mayor McGarvey and all of you municipal leaders and staff — for all that you do. And a big thanks to our host mayor, Jim Watson, for fearlessly leading this city, and welcoming us to beautiful Ottawa this week.

As many of you know, before my time at Queen's Park, I had the honour of serving on Hamilton's City Council for many years. I have walked a mile in your shoes.

And I know – from years of working with the folks in this room, and speaking with families across this great province – that no matter what part of Ontario we live in, we all want similar things. We all imagine a better tomorrow for ourselves, and an even better future for our kids, and for the communities we serve.

A future where life is more affordable, and folks have good-paying, quality jobs they can raise a family on. Where everyone can send their kids to school close to home, A future where you can count on essential services like world-class public health care. Where people can get to and from work on safe, well-maintained roads, with shorter commutes, less congestion and fewer delays – so they can spend less time stuck in the car or on transit, and more time with their loved ones.

We all want a future where our towns and cities continue to be the heart of life at home.

With provincial funding for municipalities that's stable, predictable and certain, so the things our families count on, will always be there — from the arenas where our kids learn to skate, to the festivals and events where we enjoy time together with friends and neighbours and make lasting memories.

This is the shared vision of a prosperous and thriving Ontario that we all work to make a reality every day.

It's a vision that hinges on the relationship between the provincial government and municipalities. And I would like to talk about what has been happening, and what should be happening.

This morning, I listened to Premier Doug Ford's speech.

It's clear he hasn't been listening to you. And his priorities don't match yours.

So now, the countdown to devastating cuts is on.

Slashing public health and child care is slashing things that keep our families safe and healthy.

You know that the human cost of failing people when it comes to public health, ambulance services and child care is unthinkable.

And so is the Ford Tax I know so many of you are now being forced to contemplate to fill the holes Mr. Ford is digging in your budgets.

I find it hard to believe I heard him lecturing you about how to spend your already-stretched tax dollars. Lecturing won't stop measles outbreaks. Lecturing won't help parents find an affordable, safe child care spot for their little one so they can go back to work.

Doug Ford doesn't think it's his job to help you. In fact, he's creating problems, and throwing them at the feet of municipal councils.

Things were bad enough.

Decades of cuts to health care by successive governments have left folks to face dangerously overcrowded hospitals. The Liberals closed hundreds of schools while allowing the school repair backlog to balloon to 16 billion dollars.

And municipal leaders have endured years of cuts to the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund. In 2018, support for municipal governments constituted just 5.6 percent of all provincial transfers. Of 133.7 billion dollars in provincial spending, just 4.2 billion dollars went to municipal governments.

In many areas, Kathleen Wynne let Ontario down.

Many of you expected better following the election. Many of you hoped for a new, more positive relationship with the province. But that didn't happen. And in many ways, Doug Ford is taking things from bad to worse.

I expected the March budget to be painful for a lot of people.

What I did not expect was the unprecedented pile-on Mr. Ford's orchestrating against municipalities.

According to Moody's, his cuts to public health agencies, planned gas tax transfers, paramedic services, and child care — alone will take away \$2 billion from municipalities over the next 10 years.

Never mind what's coming next. In 2020 alone, that's \$300 million you were counting on.

Gone with a stroke of Doug Ford's pen.

Without consultation.

And the future of all gas tax transfers are now in doubt, because Mr. Ford has put that program under review.

Mr. Ford's budget slashes overall funding for the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing by 25 per cent. When municipalities from Kingston to Kenora are desperate for more affordable housing solutions. And at a time when many of your communities are dealing with manufacturing and auto job losses, Ford's budget decimates Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade with a cut of \$185 million, and cuts \$700 million from colleges, universities and skills training.

And Mr. Ford has only compounded the \$290-million cut to infrastructure commitments by refusing to do the paperwork and get the funding flowing quickly, so he can play a blame-game with the federal government before the October election.

And, of course, Mr. Ford cut the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund. A fund that is absolutely crucial to the health of municipalities across Ontario, especially in smaller, northern and rural communities.

It was hard enough to build the roads, bridges, culverts and critical infrastructure Ontarians need without Mr. Ford making it harder.

These days, your infrastructure is not only threatened by age.

Floods in the southwest and the east. Tornadoes in the east and the southwest. Wildfires in the north.

Climate change is hurting us now. And the climate crisis is threatening our children's futures.

Yet, Doug Ford has slashed funding for flood management and for conservation authorities, and he's declared war on the environment.

But the worst example of Ford cutting first and asking later, is public health.

I'm worried.

And I know many of you are, too.

By pushing a higher proportion of funding onto municipalities, Doug Ford is moving billions of dollars of burden onto your budgets, and your property tax payers. And he's putting at risk the programs that keep people healthy and safe, from clean water testing to containing outbreaks.

When it comes to partnerships between local governments, I believe they should be forged with a handshake, not a hatchet (thank the Mayor of Burlington for that one)!

Municipal governments are still recovering from the last round of Conservative amalgamation and downloading in the '90s, followed by a decade and a half of Liberal neglect.

Ontario's premier should always respect the will of democratically elected local governments. He should work with them, not try to override their wishes. Because the premier's job is to support and partner with municipalities, not rule them.

This is not what people voted for.

Personne n'a voté pour ça.

Doug Ford's meddling in municipal and regional elections in Toronto, Niagara, Peel, York, and Muskoka was wrong. He ripped up wards. He cancelled elections in the middle of the campaign. And when democratically elected councils told him what they thought, he threatened the notwithstanding clause to bulldoze any dissent.

This was never about whether or not you like Toronto, or if you thought its Council was too large. Mr. Ford's decision was about showing Mayors, Councillors, Chairs, Wardens and local elected leaders across the province who is boss.

And I worry he's doing it again, by reversing reforms to the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal, bringing back the bad ol' OMB days, to overrule, rip up or rewrite municipal official plans, subdivision plans and zoning bylaws.

Without consultation.

We need to reset the provincial-municipal relationship. True partnership means respecting and trusting municipalities.

That's why I've introduced a bill called the Municipal Representation and Restructuring Protection Act.

The bill makes it clear to this premier — and future governments — that municipal leaders are part of responsible, accountable local government, and they and their citizens should to get to decide how their municipalities are governed.

If passed, the bill will protect municipalities from future election meddling.

Local governments should absolutely be free to evolve to better serve their communities. And growing, shrinking, or redrawing boundaries can only come from the community, and from

community leadership — the people who know best.

Nous défendrons toujours tous les Ontariennes et Ontariens.

That means no more backroom deals. No more political vendettas. No more meddling.

This would pave the way for a true provincial-municipal partnership, where we work together to do what's right for people.

On a besoin d'un changement pour le mieux.

I believe in our shared vision.

A vision of hope. A vision for more opportunity for more people.

And a vision of a provincial-municipal partnership based on respecting the priorities of families, and delivering on the investments that communities across our province deserve: investments like stable, predictable infrastructure funding, funding for schools, and more funding for the front-lines of public health care.

We need to keep pushing for the increase to the municipal gas tax transfer your communities were counting on, invest more in our roads and bridges, and support the critical maintenance needed to keep them safe, all year long.

That includes bringing winter highway maintenance back into the public sector.

I believe OMPF should be raised to \$550 million, followed by regular, ongoing increases. We need to invest in the things that will make life better for people. Things like energy infrastructure, rural broadband, and municipal infrastructure.

We also need to lower costs for families, businesses and municipalities. But it's wrong for the provincial government to preach fiscal responsibility only to rip funding away and force municipalities to cut services or raise taxes.

We should be investing in services like public health today, knowing how much money it will save us tomorrow. Sometimes that means doing things differently. Sometimes it means borrowing money, or asking the very wealthiest people and most profitable corporations to pay just a little more. But it costs far less to keep people healthy than it does to treat people in hospitals.

Not to mention, it's the right thing to do.

Ontarians have more in common than we have differences.

We all want a future with vibrant communities, world-class health care, better jobs and opportunities, and good, safe roads and transit systems to take us home to our families.

Together, we can build that future.

Together, we can make Ontario the best place in the world to live, work, do business and thrive.

Pour un Ontario meilleur, agissons ensemble.

Thank you very much. Merci beaucoup. Miigwetch.