

An Address By

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The Canadian Club

**The Royal York Hotel
Toronto, Ontario**

Monday, March 22, 1999

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Thank you, Mary Anne.

Good afternoon, everyone.

It is a pleasure to come to this podium.

**Your club is a great Canadian tradition. A
forum for ideas that provoke and persuade ...
enlighten and infuriate ... criticize and
comfort.**

**And those are just the Presidents'
introductions!**

It may be a novel experience for some of you to sit down to lunch with a New Democrat.

New experiences can be amazing things.

It makes me think of a story about Tommy Douglas.

Tommy was at a meeting, helping to plan a party convention in Toronto. The question arose: how to start it off on a note of high drama?

Someone said: "Well, we could have a nude woman ride down Yonge Street on a horse."

Tommy replied: "What a great idea! It must be a long time since the people of Toronto have seen a horse!"

I don't own a horse. But I am pleased to have the opportunity to share thoughts with you about what's at stake for all of us in the next election.

And I do mean all of us.

I believe every Ontarian should ask questions of the three parties. The tougher, the better.

Je crois que chaque Ontarien et Ontarienne devrait poser des questions aux trois partis. Plus elles sont difficiles, meilleures elles sont.

Let me first tell you where I'm coming from.

Mary Anne gave you some details. Let me shed some more light.

I began as a teacher. Then I became a lawyer. In '87, I was elected to office. I served in cabinet. And in '96, I became party leader.

Some say I'm going down the ladder of public esteem.

I would respectfully disagree.

Politics are important because that's how we make decisions, together as a community.

The decisions Ontarians make in the next election will be some of the most important of our lifetimes.

If we don't make them, together as a community, they will still get made — but purely as business decisions.

The quality of our health care, schools and communities ... could well depend on the size of our bank accounts.

Some might say: "Well, what's wrong with that? Public services should be run more like a business."

Let's ask the tough questions I talked about: Should we expect government to be efficient and disciplined? Yes.

A tougher question: Should we expect business to be more efficient and disciplined?

My answer is an even louder yes.

Ted Sorenson, the historian and advisor to President Kennedy, was once told that politicians just don't get the realities of the bottom line.

He responded: "Don't criticize me for never having met a payroll if you've never had to carry a precinct."

Politics and business have a lot in common. But there are exceptions.

It's worth our while to re-consider our expectations of both.

When you're the government and times are tough, you can't close down shop and move to Mexico.

Expectations are higher, and rightly so. People have put their trust in you. You can't run away.

Believe me, I know from first-hand experience.

Government must answer, not only to the people it seeks to serve, but also to the generations that follow.

And, I would suggest that business must answer, not only to shareholders ... but to the communities where they do business.

Les gouvernements doivent répondre pas seulement aux gens qu'ils servent, mais aussi aux générations à venir.

Et je crois que les entreprises doivent répondre pas seulement à leurs actionnaires... mais aussi aux communautés où ils font des affaires.

Both business and government must have a plan. Know where the money is coming from. Be honest. Realistic and responsible. And keep their eyes on the long-term.

You can boost short-term profits by firing half your work force ... and terrorizing the rest. You can ignore those leaks in the roof. You can pollute to your heart's content.

You can indulge the fantasies of the CEO and spend millions on self-congratulatory TV ads.

You can use creative accounting. Try to make people think you're making investments ... when you're only announcing them.

You can do all that. It might even work for a little while.

But what happens to your business? To customer service? To product quality?

If wages go down far enough .. who will buy your products?

Henry Ford once said to Walter Reuther of the Autoworkers: "I wonder if all those robots are going to take out union cards, Walter."

Walter replied: "Interesting question, Henry. I was wondering if they are going to buy your cars."

When business considers short-term profits its only mission ... what happens to its ability to make the changes that absolutely must be made to succeed in the long-run?

Above all, what happens to its good name?

What if that name is "Ontario," — a name that took your parents, and my parents, and their parents generations to build?

To those who say business is a role model for government, I would say yes, it is a role model.

But it's not the whole model.

Show me any nation's constitution that has the word, "shareholder," in it.

Go through Pericles, and find the place where he said good citizenship depends on your credit limit.

Citizens are more than consumers. And businesses are more than profit-makers. They are part of the community.

Let me look at expectations another way.

Government must do some things ... that business simply cannot do by itself.

None of us refers to our kids – or to ourselves – as “human capital.” But I agree with Lester Thurow and other economists who say that human capital is the single most important comparative advantage in the global market place.

The kind and quantity of our natural resources no longer make much difference. Neither does closeness to major markets.

Technology has made those factors a thing of the past. Money can move around the world in a nanosecond. In fact, some employees at certain transnationals have moved billions that fast without telling their CEOs about it!

What counts most is the skills and knowledge of our workforce. We ought to invest in them.

What else must be done?

Invest in public health care.

If we continue to americanize and privatize health care ... we will destroy one of Ontario's major comparative advantages.

Americans spend more on average on their health care than we do, but get less than we do.

It makes a big difference to their productivity.

A case in point. In 1993-94 ... when the NDP was in power ... Six Billion Dollars was invested in Ontario's auto industry. It was the biggest single investment in that industry ever made.

Why did GM, Chrysler and Ford do that? Not because of tax rates. Or subsidies. Not because of the exchange rate. Not even because of the Blue Jays.

They invested in Ontario because our public health care system saved them, on average, \$700 per vehicle.

Ladies and gentlemen, here comes another one of those amazing experiences I alluded to earlier.

When you began your soup, you knew I was going to argue that the Harris government is anti-labour.

It is that, I agree.

I would also argue that ... by its massive cuts to education and health care ... the Harris government is also profoundly anti-business.

Mike Harris is destroying the comparative advantages that took generations to build.

He must be stopped.

Now some folks will say, "Wait a minute, Howie, the people of Ontario aren't with you on this one."

Let me tell you what I'm hearing as I travel across our province.

They like the rhetoric. They're not so happy with the results. Especially when it's their hospital or their school closing.

Above all, one message comes through: enough is enough.

It doesn't surprise me that many are cynical. They are tired of sacrifice. Of working longer. Trying harder. But getting further behind.

That's one of the reasons our party released our election platform early.

Our message to all those Ontarians: Today's NDP is clearly on your side.

I'm proud that we are the first out the gates. The first to put our ideas on the table where they can be examined and judged.

Our commitments are detailed. Rock-solid. And costed out.

They will not add to the deficit. Not by one single cent.

The NDP is going into the campaign with the discipline and efficiency of the most successful of businesses. We have a plan. The details are nailed down. And we know where the money is coming from.

Maybe hearing a New Democrat talk this way is another of those amazing new experiences I talked about.

Get used to it.

Unlike Conservatives, we're being straight with you.

Unlike Liberals, we'll promise only what we can deliver.

The future of Ontario economically ... and as a community ... depends on all of us lifting our share of the load.

C'est pourquoi le NPD, et seulement le NPD, va annuler la réduction d'impôt pour les six pourcent les plus fortunés - les Ontariens dont le revenu imposable est supérieur à quatre-vingt mille dollars par année.

That's why the NDP, and only the NDP, will roll back the tax cut for the Six Per Cent at the top — those Ontarians with taxable incomes over \$80,000 a year.

They're the folks, and some of you may be here today, who will get 25 Per Cent of the benefit from the Harris tax cut.

Even some of the Top Six Per Cent have questioned the wisdom of the tax cut from the beginning. And some of those folks may be here today ... at least I know I am!

For most Ontarians, any benefit is more than wiped out by user fees, hidden taxes, higher property taxes and soaring tuitions.

Liberals don't like the tax cut, but they will leave it exactly as it is. In essence, they are running on Mike Harris's 1995 platform.

They criticize the Harris agenda. But they won't do the one thing that must be done to get rid of that agenda.

Just by taking back the tax cut from the Six Per Cent at the top, we will have One and Half Billion Dollars. We will put that money back where it belongs.

Back into health care, schools and communities.

Back where it can do the most good for the most people.

Back where we can start to deal with the social deficits that threaten all of us.

Let me give you a couple of examples.

The Ontario Medical Association says that 1800 people in this province die every year from air-pollution induced diseases.

Those diseases don't care how much you've got in your RRSP.

Another example:

You may be aware that I've spent a lot of time, all across Ontario, going on duty with health care professionals who treat the homeless.

Those workers told me that 38 per cent of the homeless in Toronto now carry the tuberculosis bacterium. If we don't deal with that soon, we're going to have one helluva public health problem on our hands.

It was wrong to cut Six Billion Dollars from hospitals, schools and communities. Wrong to use that money to pay for a tax cut that benefits mainly only a few.

Conservatives like to carry around a jar of loonies.

But the photographers go away too soon.

If they stuck around, they'd see white collar crime in action: the government with both hands in that jar. Taking out every single one of those loonies and adding them to the stash of six billion to pay for the tax cut.

There's a more efficient and disciplined way to go.

It's spelled out in this book. I invite you to take one home with you.

Here are some highlights:

We will stop the move to American-style, for-profit health care and home care.

Our Patients' Bill of Rights guarantees professional assessment of all emergency cases within 15 minutes of coming into the ER.

We will reinvest in our schools.

It is unacceptable that there are public school students today in Ontario who have to sell chocolate bars to get enough money for basic school supplies.

We will cut university and college tuition fees by 10 per cent.

Ontario must get serious about the strength of our human capital — the highly skilled workforce that will win in the global market place.

Let me step up to bat once again, and ask another tough question.

If you vote NDP, will you be throwing your vote away?

This is my answer:

Forget the messenger ... look at the message.

Les Libéraux font campagne sur la Révolution du bon sens. Ils veulent seulement aller un peu moins vite. Mais c'est quand même la mauvaise direction.

The Liberals are running on the Common Sense Revolution. They just want to go a little slower. But it's still the wrong direction.

If you like americanized health care and privatized education, you have two choices: Conservative and Liberal.

If you want a government that will do the most good for the most people ... that has a plan and knows how it will pay for it, then I suggest you have one choice: Today's NDP.

I would encourage you to vote for what you really believe, in your heart, is the right thing to do.

What is the right thing to do? That is something ... that only you can ask of yourselves.

And that leads me to the final tough question today: Can the NDP win the next election?

The pundits and pollsters say: "No."

But hold on a minute. They were wrong about Frank Miller. David Peterson. Bob Rae. Lyn McLeod. And they laughed at Mike Harris.

At the moment, the media don't give New Democrats much of a chance. My reaction?

They're in for a surprise – and it won't be a nude woman coming down Yonge Street on a horse.

Thank you for inviting me today.

(THE END)