

Simcoe-Grey MP disappointed with Throne Speech, lacked specifics

The Speech from the Throne was delivered by Canada's Governor General Julie Payette last Wednesday and supported by the NDP, preventing a fall election.

Highlights from the speech include promises to create over one million jobs, create a Canada-wide early learning and childcare system, penalize individuals who neglect seniors and put forward plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The Conservatives were highly critical of the Throne Speech, including Simcoe-Grey MP Terry Dowdall who said he was most concerned with its lack of timelines and projected costs, since the last federal budget was released over a year-and-a-half ago.

"A lot of things were mentioned but they weren't really put with a timeline and I think that's what Canadians get upset about because they want to know exactly when these things will roll out and if they actually will be successful," said Dowdall.

He said one of his biggest disappointments with the Throne Speech was the proroguing of government, which he said "made absolutely no sense."

"I'm still getting calls from people with issues that I haven't been able to address [in Parliament]. Quite frankly, we have a tourism industry that's having such a tough time, I'm hearing from pilots, I'm hearing from so many industries," Dowdall remarked.

"The Trudeau government, as far as I'm concerned, they don't really have a plan to deal with the second wave of COVID beyond shutting down our economy once again and we can't accept an economic shutdown as the only solution."

Dowdall told The Times rapid testing to ensure individuals are clear of the virus before visiting a grandparent, attending an event or going to work could be the solution.

"We want to fight for a credible plan that's going to help Canadians stay safe and ensure the jobs will be protected and in safe environments and we really didn't see that," he said.

"We know that we can overcome adversity together and emerge from this COVID era a lot stronger and more united than ever before, if we have a plan."

Dowdall said it's important to remember while the pandemic poses a threat to public health, there are many side effects associated with lock downs.

"Definitely the mental stress of this issue from children, from seniors not able to see their family, couples that can't get back together because they're engaged in different countries," he noted.

"We need to come up with a game plan to move forward with COVID, not just empty ideas. We need timelines and we need budget numbers."

For CERB, Dowdall said it's an important benefit for covering Canadians basic needs, but the government has to be cognizant of the fact that jobs do exist and businesses are now struggling to find employees.

He told The Times an incentive for getting individuals back to work could help businesses survive and recover the economy.

More importantly, an economic snapshot and forecast is needed so the federal government can properly determine its finances.

"Whether or not at this particular time interest rates are good, if they go up, I'm spending my children's and grandchildren's money

later on in life," Dowdall said.

"We need to make sure that whatever programs we implement are ones that help Canadians and, at the same time, won't hinder individuals later on that are trying to buy a house."

Dowdall also noted he would have preferred to see a more collaborative approach between provinces, working together to recover Canada's economy.

"I didn't see a real outreach to other provinces, so we definitely want to make sure that we amplify unity in the country," he stressed.

"It didn't seem like a reset, it seemed more like a recycled Throne Speech as far as I'm concerned, but some of the issues that were brought to light are ones that we as Conservatives want to see move forward, like rural internet."

Dowdall said internet connectivity and its cost are huge issues in the rural parts of the Simcoe-Grey riding. Problems with internet have only been exasperated by the pandemic with more people working from home and some students learning online.

"It is a key infrastructure piece that we need to make sure that we can provide in Simcoe-Grey," he stressed.

However, the Liberal government has not yet released any clear timelines on the implementation of a stronger rural internet network.

One topic the Throne Speech was silent on was funds for the agricultural sector, which is an important industry for the local economy, said Dowdall.

"Whether it's farms, agri-foods, everything from apples orchards to vegetables, there's lots of concerns there with the new taxes that are coming out," he noted.

"We just need to be cognizant of the fact that as we increase cost, it increases the cost of all our products and at the same time we're trying to make life more affordable for individuals."

Dowdall said he'll be back in the House of Commons over the next couple of weeks to press the Liberals on timelines, a fiscal plan, rapid testing to get the economy back on track and other issues impacting his riding.

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