

Ontarians set to go to the polls February 27 following snap election call

By Brock Weir

Ontarians are set to go to the polls on February 27 following a snap election call by Progressive Conservative Premier Doug Ford.

Lieutenant-Governor Edith Dumont, the King's representative in Ontario, made things official on Wednesday morning, issuing the traditional writ that kicks off the campaign.

Ford made his intentions to call an election more than a year ahead of schedule last week in Brampton, citing a need for a renewed mandate from Ontarians amid looming tariff threats from US President Donald Trump.

"We're entering a period of unprecedented economic risk and lengthy negotiations ? against President Trump and with the federal government and other provinces," said Ford in a social media post on Tuesday, ahead of his formal campaign launch in Windsor, ON, Wednesday morning. "Responding to this challenge will demand extraordinary action: the need to invest tens of billions of dollars in unplanned spending and tough choices about making Ontario's economy the most competitive place to invest, create jobs and do business. To protect Ontario, I'm asking the people for a strong mandate ? a strong, stable, four-year mandate that will outlive and outlast the Trump administration.

"During this time, I will never stop working for you. I will remain chair of the Council of the Federation and will join my fellow premiers and the prime minister for weekly meetings. I will travel to Washington to make Canada's case against tariffs. I will fight to protect Ontario: for our families, for our workers, for our businesses, for all of us."

Ford seeks a third term as Ontario Premier against Ontario NDP leader Marit Stiles and Ontario Liberal leader ? and former Mississauga mayor ? Bonnie Crombie.

Both party leaders said a new mandate wasn't needed at this time ? particularly in light of the Progressive Conservatives' clear majority at Queen's Park.

"While the people of Ontario are anxious about the grave threat of tariffs, Doug Ford is pursuing his own political gain," said Stiles in a statement. "People need a Premier who will fight like hell for every single job that's at risk, not run to the polls over a year early. Doug Ford thinks that he can call an early election to escape his record of failure on housing, health care, education and affordability. We won't let him.

"In the coming weeks, we have the power to choose a better future for our province. We have the power to fight back against Donald Trump and turn the page on Doug Ford. Together, we can win an NDP government that's on your side."

In a campaign message, Crombie said the cost of an election is wasteful.

"Doug Ford's Ontario has failed you," said Crombie in a statement. "He's wasting \$175 million on an early election instead of using it to fix our broken healthcare system and make your life more affordable. As Premier, I'll deliver more for you by guaranteeing you'll have a family doctor, cutting taxes on your paycheque and home heating, and building homes you can afford."

In Dufferin-Caledon, the PC banner will once again be carried by Sylvia Jones, who has most recently served as Deputy Premier and Minister of Health. She will be challenged by former Orangeville mayor Sandy Brown, who will be carrying the Green Party of Ontario banner.

At press time this week, no candidates had been formally confirmed for the NDP or the Liberals.

Orangeville Councillor Tess Prendergast was previously confirmed as the Ontario Liberal candidate for Dufferin-Caledon but pulled out of the race earlier this month following the death of her father. She committed to supporting the party and the new candidate once they are confirmed.