

# A Plan for Care and Opportunity



NEWS RELEASE

March 28, 2018

## Delivering a Plan for Care and Opportunity

*Ontario Continuing to Invest in Health Care, Child Care and Mental Health*

Today the government released the 2018 Budget, which includes significant new investments in health care, child care, home care and mental health, and new measures to create more job opportunities for people across the province. The Budget also focuses on initiatives that make life more affordable and provide more financial security during a time of rapid economic change.

Ontario's economy is getting stronger, with the unemployment rate at its lowest in almost two decades. Yet between the rising cost of living and stable, long-term jobs becoming harder to find, many people are struggling to take care of themselves and their families. As the changing economy widens the gaps within our society, the government has a plan to build a fairer, better Ontario by supporting everyone in the province with the care and opportunity they need to get ahead.

Charles Sousa, Minister of Finance, introduced the Budget in the legislature today. If passed, Ontario would expand OHIP+ with free prescription drugs for everyone 65 and over, improve mental health care and addictions services, and introduce free preschool child care for children aged two-and-a-half until eligible for kindergarten.

### Investing in Care

Ontario is helping ease the mounting pressure that individuals and families are facing and giving them every opportunity to care for their loved ones by:

- Introducing the new Seniors' Healthy Home Program. This recognizes the costs associated with older seniors living at home, where they want to be. It provides a benefit of up to \$750 annually for eligible households led by seniors 75 and over to help them live independently and offset the costs of maintaining their homes.
- Introducing a new Ontario Drug and Dental Program, reimbursing 80 per cent, up to a maximum of \$400 per single person, \$600 per couple and \$700 for a family of four with two children, of eligible prescription drug and dental expenses each year, for those without workplace health benefits or not covered by OHIP+ or other government programs.
- Providing more affordable quality child care by making preschool child care free for children aged two-and-a-half until they are eligible for kindergarten. This saves a family with one child \$17,000, on average, and builds on the savings families get from full-day kindergarten. Early learning has been demonstrated to improve children's academic performance throughout their lives.

- Providing better and faster access to mental health and addictions services for hundreds of thousands more children, young people and adults across Ontario — bringing the total funding to more than \$17 billion over four years.
- Improving hospitals by providing better access to care, reducing wait times, addressing capacity issues and better meeting the needs of Ontario's growing and aging population through an additional \$822-million investment in 2018–19 — the largest single government investment in hospitals in almost a decade. The province is also investing approximately \$19 billion over 10 years to build and renovate hospitals to provide more and faster health care for people.
- Creating 30,000 new long-term care beds over the next 10 years — adding 5,000 new beds by 2022 — to help people who can no longer live independently and provide peace of mind for people who care for them. These new beds are in addition to the 30,000 existing beds being redeveloped.
- Building a fair society and enhancing choice and independence by investing \$1.8 billion to strengthen services for 47,000 adults with developmental disabilities and reforming the social assistance system to focus on people rather than on rules and regulations.

### **Making Life More Affordable**

Families are facing mounting pressures — whether at work or on their commute or in their pocketbook — and it's having a real impact on people's lives and our ability to care for our loved ones. Ontario is taking steps to make life more affordable and provide more financial security during a time of rapid economic change:

- Making prescriptions completely free for everyone 65 and over through OHIP+, ensuring that no senior citizen ever needs to go without necessary drugs. By eliminating the Ontario Drug Benefit annual deductible and co-pay, this saves the average Ontario senior \$240 per year. This expansion of OHIP+ follows the introduction of free prescriptions for everyone under the age of 25 in the *2017 Ontario Budget*.
- Providing a public transit tax credit that saves seniors up to \$450 a year, as of July 1, 2017, and lowering the cost of commuting by about \$720 per year for the average commuter transferring between the GO/UP Express network and the TTC.
- Cutting residential electricity bills as of July 1, 2017, by 25 per cent on average and up to 40 or 50 per cent for eligible rural and low-income families.

### **Creating Opportunity for People**

Ontario is helping people adapt to, and thrive in, a changing economy to make sure the province remains the best place to live, work and do business. Actions include:

- Making college and university tuition free for more than 225,000 students of all ages. Free or low tuition is available for students from low- and middle-income families; tuition is free

for those earning up to \$90,000 and students from families who earn up to \$175,000 are also eligible for financial aid.

- Preparing students for good jobs by providing \$132 million over three years to develop postsecondary education programs that respond to the changing needs of students and employers — including strengthening partnerships with local employers, offering more flexible and experiential learning, and increasing the number of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) graduates by 25 per cent over the next five years, from 40,000 to 50,000 per year.
- Planning to create and retain over 70,000 jobs by renewing and extending the Jobs and Prosperity Fund with an increase of \$900 million over the next 10 years.
- Providing \$935 million in new funding over three years through the Good Jobs and Growth Plan to support Ontario businesses, students and graduates, and help attract good, well-paying jobs.
- Making workplaces fairer for everyone by tackling the gender wage gap and increasing transparency in hiring processes with proposed legislation that would, if passed, require all publicly posted jobs to include a pay rate or salary scale.
- Providing a long-awaited raise for 1.2 million people across Ontario by increasing the minimum wage to \$14 per hour on January 1, 2018 and \$15 per hour on January 1, 2019.

The province has beaten its fiscal targets every year since the recession, and is forecasting a budget surplus in 2017–18. Beginning in 2018–19, Ontario is choosing to make more investments in the care and services that the people of this province rely on. As a result, the province will run modest deficits of less than one per cent of GDP. The Budget outlines a path back to balance by 2024–25, building on the province's long track record of responsible fiscal management.

### Quote

“Ontario’s economy is getting stronger, businesses are creating record numbers of jobs, and unemployment is at the lowest rate in almost two decades. Our budget is balanced. We have a \$600 million surplus. Now, we are using our strengthened fiscal position to make life more affordable for families and create new opportunity for businesses across the province. The 2018 Budget will include new investments in health care, child care and seniors care to help even more families get ahead.”

— Charles Sousa, Minister of Finance

### Quick Facts

- The government is choosing to make new investments of \$20.3 billion over the next three years to support vital public services that people in Ontario rely on, focusing on priority areas such as health care, education, child care, seniors, social services, growing the economy and creating good jobs.

- Since the recession, Ontario's economy has gained over 800,000 net new jobs. The unemployment rate has steadily declined to a 17-year low in February 2018, and has remained below the national average for 34 consecutive months.
- Since 2014 Ontario's economy has grown more than Canada's and all other G7 countries.

### **Additional Resources**

- Read the *2018 Ontario Budget: A Plan for Care and Opportunity*
  - For more details about the government's plan, read the fact sheets:
    - Ontario Budget 2018: Top 10 Highlights
    - Making Everyday Life More Affordable
    - More Child Care, More Choice
    - Caring for Ontario's Seniors
    - Faster, Better Access to Health Care
    - A Plan for Care
    - Growing Ontario's Competitiveness and Creating Good Jobs
    - Ontario's Economic and Fiscal Focus

---

### **For Media Inquiries Only:**

Jessica Martin, Minister's Office  
[jessica.martin@ontario.ca](mailto:jessica.martin@ontario.ca), 416-212-5181

Scott Blodgett, Ministry of Finance  
[scott.blodgett@ontario.ca](mailto:scott.blodgett@ontario.ca), 416-325-0324

**ontario.ca/finance**

*Disponible en français*