

## JOBS FOR TODAY AND TOMORROW

### 2016 ONTARIO BUDGET



# Transforming Health Care

Ontario's economy supports strong public services. Health care is one of the most important provincial services on which Ontarians rely. Through recent actions to transform health care, the Province has increased patients' access to primary care, provided more care for people at home, and reduced wait times for surgeries, diagnostic procedures and emergency department care. The government has invested almost \$2 billion to significantly reduce wait times since 2003–04.

The government has succeeded in bringing down annual spending growth on health care from about seven per cent to about two per cent — while continuing to improve access to care.

## Faster Access to Health Care

### Primary Care

- ▶ For patients with multiple conditions and the most complex care needs, the government has expanded its community Health Links — local, interdisciplinary care teams — to 82 from 69 across the province.
- ▶ To further reduce wait times for key health care services, the Province is planning to:
  - Expand the scope of practice of registered nurses, allowing them to prescribe some medications directly to patients; and
  - Make more vaccines available, such as travel vaccines, through pharmacists.
- ▶ Ontario will invest an additional \$85 million over three years to ensure primary care teams can effectively recruit and retain qualified interprofessional staff. These investments will help clinics continue to provide services across the province, including northern, rural and fast-growing communities.

### Better Access to Specialized Care

- ▶ The Province is contributing to the cost of one in vitro fertilization cycle per eligible patient, at more than 50 clinics across Ontario.
- ▶ In 2016–17, the government will provide about \$1 million to fund support services for those affected by pregnancy and infant loss, including resources to train volunteers and support parents and families who have experienced loss.

### **Investments in High-Quality Hospital Care**

- ▶ The government is increasing funding for hospitals by \$345 million in response to the growing demand for highly specialized and complex services and the need to expand access in growing communities across the province.
- ▶ Ontario plans to provide \$12 billion over 10 years in capital grants to hospitals to continue building essential infrastructure. Currently there are about 35 major hospital projects under construction or in various stages of planning right across the province.

### **Expanding Services in Cancer Care**

- ▶ The Province is investing an additional \$130 million in cancer care services, over the next three years, allowing for the delivery of more services and preventive programs.
- ▶ Ontario is also investing in infrastructure to improve access to stem cell transplantation programs. This investment will create highly specialized rooms to enhance the life-saving services provided at Toronto's University Health Network, Hamilton Health Sciences Centre and The Ottawa Hospital.

### **Mental Health and Addictions**

- ▶ Phase Two of the Province's 10-year Mental Health and Addictions Strategy includes investing \$16 million over three years, starting in 2014–15, to create 1,000 new housing spaces for people with mental health and addictions issues, including \$4 million for 248 supportive housing units in 2016–17.
- ▶ Ontario is also providing \$1.5 million to the Dave Smith Youth Treatment Centre in Ottawa to support the construction of a new 30-bed youth residential treatment facility that will increase capacity, improve efficiency and ensure client needs are met in a safe and comfortable environment.
- ▶ The Province is providing \$2 million to 10 Indigenous organizations to engage with their communities and make recommendations on the unique mental health and addictions issues facing Indigenous peoples.

### **Sustaining Ontario's Public Drug Programs**

- ▶ The Province will introduce a redesigned public drug program by 2019. The new program will improve long-term sustainability while ensuring access to drugs for people who need them.
- ▶ Starting August 1, 2016, the income thresholds to qualify for the low-income seniors' benefit will increase from \$16,018 to \$19,300 for single seniors and from \$24,175 to \$32,300 for senior couples, consistent with the Guaranteed Annual Income System (GAINS) income levels.
  - Under these new thresholds, up to 170,000 seniors will be eligible to pay less for their prescription medications.
  - For seniors with income above these new thresholds, the annual deductible under the Ontario Drug Benefit Program will be increased from \$100 to \$170 and co-payments will be increased from \$6.11 to \$7.11 per claim.

## Providing More Coordinated Care in the Community

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- ▶ Ontario has extended its commitment to increase funding by \$250 million to expand capacity to deliver high-quality home and community care.
  - The government plans to continue to fund growth in community-based care at about five per cent per year to 2017–18, as committed to in previous *Budgets*.
- ▶ The Province is investing an additional \$75 million over the next three years in community-based, residential hospice and palliative care, for a total of about \$155 million.
  - This will bring Ontario’s funding of residential hospices to more than \$55 million annually in 2018–19.
- ▶ The government will invest an additional \$10 million annually in Behavioural Supports Ontario to help long-term care home residents with dementia and other complex behaviours and neurological conditions.
- ▶ The Province will increase its investment in resident care needs by two per cent a year over the next three years.

## Keeping Ontarians Healthy

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- ▶ The Ontario legislature passed the *Healthy Menu Choices Act, 2015*, which comes into force in January 2017. The Act will require food premises with 20 or more locations to post calorie information for food and beverage items.
  - To further help consumers, the government is proposing to amend the Act to require the caloric and related information on menus and menu boards to appear close to the listing or picture of food items.
- ▶ The government is developing amendments to the Immunization of School Pupils Act that, if passed, would protect students and communities by including stronger requirements for school vaccine exemptions.
- ▶ The Province is proposing to authorize pharmacists to administer a wider range of vaccines, increasing immunization efficiency and convenience for Ontarians.
- ▶ The government is making the shingles vaccine free for eligible Ontario seniors between the ages of 65 and 70 — saving them about \$170 and reducing emergency room visits and hospitalizations.
- ▶ To further support smoking cessation prevention efforts, the Province is increasing the tobacco tax rate by \$3 per carton of 200 cigarettes, and increasing tobacco taxes annually at the rate of inflation beginning in 2017.
  - The Province will use \$5 million of increased revenues from the tobacco tax to support a new investment that will enhance priority populations’ access to smoking cessation services, no matter where they live in Ontario.