

2017 ONTARIO BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

For more information, please visit the Government of Ontario's 2017 Budget website:

<http://www.fin.gov.on.ca/en/budget/ontariobudgets/2017/>

ADULTS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

- **\$677 million over four years to enhance and expand services for Ontarians with developmental disabilities:**
 - 375+ new residential developmental services placements for individuals with urgent needs and youth transitioning from the child welfare system
 - Support 1,000 additional adults to participate in their communities
 - Establish a specialized residential support home for individuals with complex needs who are moving from justice facilities
 - Expand specialized clinical responses for individuals with complex special needs, and
 - Improve access to local community services by making the system easier to navigate.

CHILD CARE

- **Investments made in last year's budget will support access to licensed child care for 24,000 more children up to four years old in 2017-18** through new fee subsidy spaces and support for new licensed child care spaces in schools. New supports will reduce waitlists and better ensuring that parents with low- and middle-incomes can benefit in a variety of ways.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH AT RISK

- **\$21 million over the next three years in services for youth-in-care**, including transportation services so that they can stay at the same school, even if their housing situation changes locally.
- **\$134 million over four years to support new Child Welfare initiatives.**
- **\$47 million over four years for Ontario Black Youth Action Plan** to increase access to supports for 10,800 Black children and youth by 2019-20 through:
 - Culturally focused parenting and mentoring initiatives
 - Early intervention to encourage Black children to stay in school
 - Culturally focused outreach to help Black students access higher education
 - Research to ensure programs and policies meet specific needs of at-risk youth

- . Targeted skills development to help Black youth find their career path
- . Community outreach and anti-violence promotion.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

- The government expects to appoint a board of directors in spring 2017 to oversee the management of a **new, flexible and innovative financial services and pension regulator** that will strengthen consumer, investor and pension plan beneficiary protection.

EDUCATION FINANCING (OSAP)

- **Provincial grants will be replaced with a single upfront grant that enables 210,000 Ontario students to receive free average tuition** beginning in fall 2017. Additional new OSAP features:
 - . Eligible students will receive OSAP grants adequate to cover average tuition costs (including mature students and adult learners with family incomes \$50,000 or less).
 - . No Ontario student will receive less than they are currently eligible for through the 30 per cent Off Ontario Tuition Grant
 - . RESP savings will not reduce OSAP financial assistance provided to students
 - . Salary at which individuals must begin OSAP loan repayment increased from \$25,000 to \$35,000.

EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

- **New Ontario Lifelong Learning and Skills Plan to create opportunities for adult learners and workers:**
 - . Investment and enhancements to the adult education and essential skills system;
 - . The new OSAP support for mature students to access postsecondary education; and
 - . The updating of key Employment Ontario programs that support unemployed, displaced and incumbent workers who require retraining and skills building.
- **Employment and Training Services Transformation** – Over the next year, the Province will be working with its Employment Ontario service delivery partners, education and training institutions, employers, workers and job-seekers to modernize key employment and training programs, such as Second Career and the Canada–Ontario Job Grant, which support unemployed or employed workers who want to build on their skills, as well as employers with training needs.

ENERGY

- **Fair Hydro Plan will reduce electricity bills by 25 per cent on average for eligible households beginning summer 2017.** Low-income Ontarians and those living in eligible rural, remote or on-reserve First Nation communities will receive even greater reductions to their electricity bills.
- **The Rural or Remote Electricity Rate Protection Program will provide distribution delivery charge relief to a total of about 800,000 customers** served by local distribution companies with the highest rates.
- **Fifty per cent increase in Ontario Electricity Support Program monthly benefit amounts** and addition of new eligibility categories. To help eligible Ontarians receive their credits, the government is pursuing automatic qualification for customers enrolled in provincial social assistance programs.
- **\$85 million in 2017-18 to support additional retrofit activities in social housing apartment buildings across the province.** These retrofits will reduce GHG emissions and improve living conditions for low-income and vulnerable tenants, including those in small, rural, northern and Indigenous communities.

HEALTH

- **New OHIP+: Children and Youth Pharmacare program will provide free, universal, drug coverage to all Ontarians aged 24 years and under,** regardless of family income, effective Jan 1, 2018. The program will cover the cost of all Ontario Drug Benefit funded medicines, with no deductible or co-payment.
- **New federal funding of \$4.2 billion over 10 years in support of Ontario home care and mental health** initiatives.
- **\$18 million in new funding for community programs, such as Meals on Wheels** and transportation support.

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

- **Continued implementation of the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy to support access to affordable and adequate housing:**
 - **\$200 million over three years to improve access for up to 6,000 families and individuals to housing assistance and services** such as counselling, assistance with medication, and life skills training

- Supporting the construction of up to 1,500 new supportive housing units
 - \$30 million over three years for **Survivors of Domestic Violence Portable Housing Benefit Pilot** to support up to 3,000 survivors of domestic violence
 - \$90 million for **Community Homelessness Prevention Initiatives (CHPI)** over the next three years to help families and individuals stay in their homes or get the housing they need.
- **Pilot program to leverage provincial land assets to build more affordable housing units** in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area. \$70-100M in provincial lands committed to develop up to 2,000 new housing units. Pilot sites and final program design to be confirmed in spring 2017.
 - **\$640 million from 2016-17 to 2018-19 under the Social Infrastructure Fund to support the repair and modernization of community infrastructure** and address local service capacity and emerging needs. Funding will expand investment in the Affordable Housing for Ontario Program, support new construction and renovation of affordable housing units for seniors, renovate and retrofit social housing units, and help build and renovate shelters for victims of family violence.
 - **\$45 million over three years to provide up to 1,150 additional supportive housing units** for people with serious mental illness/addictions who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.
 - **Expand rent control to all private units, including those occupied on or after November 1, 1991** to strengthen protection for tenants and address rising housing costs.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

- **\$3 million in 2017-18 for the Aboriginal Community Capital Grants Program** to provide funding for First Nation communities and Indigenous organizations to build or renovate needed community infrastructure, such as community centres, daycare facilities or small business centres.
- **\$200 million over three years to enable more First Nation, Métis and Inuit learners to access high-quality postsecondary education and training** opportunities. This includes \$56 million over three years to enhance the capacity and sustainability of nine publicly funded Aboriginal Institutes. The government is working with Indigenous partners to identify additional targeted OSAP supports that will address economic barriers and improve access to postsecondary education for Indigenous students.
- **Approximately \$222 million over three years for Ontario First Nations Health Action Plan and \$104.5 million annually thereafter to address health inequities and improve access to**

culturally appropriate health services. This includes investments in Indigenous health care across Ontario, in home and community care, primary care, and diabetes prevention and management, both on- and off-reserve.

- **Six new or expanded Indigenous Mental Health and Addictions Healing and Treatment Centres.**
- **\$4 million over two years to develop two Indigenous-designed and delivered anti-racism programs,** including a youth-leading-youth program to train Indigenous youth to lead interactive workshops in schools and community settings.
- **\$44.2 million over two years for programs to make justice system culturally relevant and responsive** to Indigenous communities.
- **Expansion of five existing child and family programs on-reserve** provided by five Indigenous communities and organizations.

NEWCOMERS AND REFUGEES

- **\$21 million over three years for Ontario Bridge Training Program to help skilled newcomers** seeking licensing or certification and connect them to the labour market
- **\$6 million over next two years for Multicultural Community Capacity Grants** to support full integration and participation of immigrants, refugees and ethno-cultural communities, through activities that facilitate community engagement, social integration, education and empowerment to promote intercultural understanding and break down barriers to participation in community life and civic decision-making processes.
- **Funding to Credit Canada Debt Solutions for Newcomers & Money 101,** to provide newcomers with the financial literacy training and tools they need to navigate the Canadian banking system, understand budgeting and money management, handle credit and protect themselves from fraud.

SENIORS

- **\$8 million over the next three years for 40 new Elderly Persons Centres** by 2018–19 to meet the growing needs of seniors.
- **\$11 million over three years for the Seniors Community Grant Program** to help seniors engage socially, volunteer and continue their lifelong learning.

- **\$100 million over three years for new Dementia Strategy to support people with dementia and those who care for them** through province-wide access to community programs and other investments to enhance access to care, information and support from as early as possible once a diagnosis is made
- **\$8 million over the next three years to support 40 new community centres** to provide transportation services, social and recreational programs, and other supports that help seniors stay active and independent in their communities
- **Additional \$20 million in 2017 for respite care** – personal support services or nursing support at home, allowing caregivers to schedule breaks from caring for a loved one
- **Additional \$58 million in 2017 for long-term care homes, providing residential care and support and \$15 million increase to Food Allowance** to ensure LTC homes can provide nutritious menus that are responsive to medical and ethno-cultural needs
- **\$10 million for Behavioural Supports Ontario for specialized supports and services to meet the needs of older people with cognitive impairments** who exhibit challenging and complex behaviours, no matter where they live.
- **Ontario caregiver and infirm dependant tax credits to be replaced with a new non-refundable Ontario Caregiver Tax Credit** beginning in 2017 taxation year.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

- **\$480 million over four years to raise asset limits, increase income exemptions for cash gifts, and provide a rate increase** that will benefit more than 900,000 people across Ontario.
 - Ontario Works limits on cash and other liquid assets will be increased to \$10,000 for single individuals and \$15,000 for couples.
 - ODSP limits will be increased to \$40,000 for single individuals and \$50,000 for couples. Increases to asset limits will take effect by January 2018.
 - Two per cent Ontario Works benefits rate increase effective October 2017 and ODSP increase effective September 2017. The increase will apply to other social assistance benefits and allowances, such as the Personal Needs Allowance for those residing in institutions and emergency shelters.
 - Two per cent increase to Comfort Allowance for low-income, long-term care residents.

- ODSP and Ontario Works annual income exemption for cash gifts will be increased to **\$10,000**. Gifts in any amount will not reduce social assistance amounts people receive if the funds are used to: pay for first and last month's rent, purchase a principal residence, or buy a vehicle that they may need. These changes will take effect September 2017.
- Remote Communities Allowance will increase **\$50 per month for the first person and \$25 for each additional family member** in northern and remote communities, including the higher cost of food and transportation.

TRANSIT

- **\$56 billion over 10 years for public transit expansion**
- **New Ontario Seniors' Public Transit Tax Credit for Ontarians aged 65 or older** will provide a refundable benefit of 15 per cent of eligible public transit costs (\$130 average annual benefit)
- **Starting in 2019, gradually increase municipal share of gas tax for transit from two to 4 per cent by to reach \$642 million in funding in 2021-22**, with no added tax at the gas pump.