Fwd: TBS Budget 2017-Media Watch - 5:20pm

From: "MacIntyre, Kyle (TBS)" <kyle.macintyre@ontario.ca>
To: "Angus, Helen (TBS)" <helen.angus@ontario.ca>
Date: Thu, 27 Apr 2017 18:19:30 -0400
Attachments: image001.gif (815 bytes); ATT00001.htm (463 bytes); image002.png (143 bytes); ATT00002.htm (118.01 kB); TBS Budget 2017 Media Watch-Apr. 27-17.docx (83 kB); ATT00003.htm (168 bytes)

Begin forwarded message:

> **From:** "Doose, Ann (TBS)" <Ann.Doose@ontario.ca>
> **Date:** April 27, 2017 at 5:22:42 PM EDT
> **Subject: TBS Budget 2017-Media Watch - 5:20pm**

Good afternoon,

Attached and below are the TBS Budget Media Watch as of 5:20pm.

Please note, this round-up starts with the Canadian Press writes, then moves into mainstream media coverage from the Globe, The Toronto Star, Sun and other electronic media postings from their websites. Additional coverage and analysis will follow.

Regards,

Ann

TBS Budget 2017 Media Watch

Thursday, April-27-17

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18 ways Ontario’s 2017 budget could affect your wallet

Ontario's first balanced budget in decade promises billions in health care (OntBudget-Lockup)
Source: The Canadian Press
Apr 27, 2017 16:28

By Allison Jones

THE CANADIAN PRESS

TORONTO _ Ontario's Liberal government is promising to inject billions of new dollars into health care in its first balanced budget in a decade, a fiscal plan designed to appeal to nearly everyone in the province ahead of an election next summer.

Crafted by a party in power since 2003 that has been faring poorly in recent polls, the $141-billion budget has measures targeted at both young and old, people who access the health-care system and anyone who owns or rents a home and pays an electricity bill.

The centrepiece of the plan is a $465-million-a-year pharmacare program for children and youth, which would cover prescription medications to treat most acute and common chronic conditions for people under age 25, with no deductible or co-payment. It would start Jan. 1.

The plan will be most beneficial for youth who currently are not covered under private plans or the Ontario Drug Benefit program for social assistance recipients, but government officials weren't able to say how many people that captures.

In total, the government is promising $11.5 billion in new spending on health care over three years, including money to address hospital overcrowding, funding for mental health and addiction services, cash for hospital construction projects and home care funding.

The budget also includes funds for new child care spaces, money to build schools, measures aimed at seniors and previously announced cuts to electricity bills and plans to cool the housing market.

Much of the projected spending, however, is spread out over multiple years, well past the June 2018 election. But Finance Minister Charles Sousa said his ``socially progressive'' budget is not a ploy for votes.

``These decisions that we're making today are not based on election cycles, they're based on long-term benefit for the people of Ontario,'' he said.

Progressive Conservative Leader Patrick Brown said the budget is not, in fact, structurally balanced, because of one-time asset sale money _ such as the sale of shares of Hydro One _ and accounting ``tricks,'' such as counting public pension surpluses as assets, against the advice of the province's Auditor general.

``This budget is a patchwork attempt by a desperate government to fix the mess they've created before the next election,'' he said. ``If they lose this next election this is spending they'll never have to be accountable for.''

The price tag for the Liberals' centrepiece pharmacare plan is not in the budget itself and was provided only verbally by staffers.

``Listen, that document is what, 296 pages long,'' Sousa said when asked about the absence. ``You can't put everything in the document.''

Ontario NDP Leader Andrea Horwath, who just this week announced a New Democrat government would bring in universal pharmacare for people of all ages, said the Liberal plan seems last minute.

``I think it's quite curious as well,'' she said. ``All I can think of is that they made it up on the back of a napkin before they got to today.''

The Liberals had promised no new taxes on families, though they are increasing tobacco taxes by $10 per carton over the next three years and giving municipalities the power to introduce a hotel tax.

In addition to balancing the books this year, the government is now projecting balanced budgets through to 2019-20. Despite reaching balance, however, the province's debt continues to grow.

It is projected to be $312 billion this year, growing to $336 billion in 2019-20. Interest on debt is the fourth largest spending area, at $11.6 billion.

Historically low interest rates helped the province get to balance, but interest on debt is still projected to be the fastest growing expenditure area, at an average 3.6 per cent from 2015 to 2020.

Nonetheless, the government paints a rosy economic outlook, projecting two per cent average GDP growth through to 2020, driven by exports and business investment.

On the infrastructure front, spending is growing from a promise last year of $160 billion over 12 years to $190 billion over 13 years. The additional $30 billion will go toward new hospital projects, school renewal and child care expansion.

Ontario will also move ahead with planning a high-speed rail corridor between Toronto, Kitchener-Waterloo, London and Windsor, the government said in the budget. The project could cut travel times from Toronto to Windsor from the current four hours to two.

Under the education banner, about $16 billion is earmarked over 10 years to build and improve schools at a time when the government is coming under fire for rural school closures. Another $200 million will go to creating 24,000 child care spaces and subsidizing 60 per cent of them.

Seniors are also specifically targeted in the budget. A public transit tax credit for people 65 and older will see 15 per cent of eligible transit costs refunded with an average annual benefit of $130. That is estimated to cost the government about $10 million a year. The measure comes after the federal government announced it was eliminating a 15-per-cent tax credit for commuters who buy a transit pass.

There is also $11 million over three years for a seniors community grant program and another $8 million over three years for new community centres with seniors' programming. The province has also earmarked $100 million over three years for a dementia strategy that will include helping patients and their caregivers find support and improve training for health-care workers.

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Ontario balances budget, but debt rises to $312 billion (OntBudget-Lockup-Debt)

Source: The Canadian Press
Apr 27, 2017 16:13

By Allison Jones

THE CANADIAN PRESS

TORONTO _ Ontario's Liberal government has finally eliminated its deficit, but its debt is rising to new heights.

The province's first balanced budget in a decade gets rid of a deficit that had at one point reached about $20 billion, and the government is projecting that balance will continue through to 2020.

The debt, however, is another matter. It is projected to be $312 billion this year, or roughly $22,000 for every Ontarian. It is projected to grow to $336 billion in 2019-2020.

The province's net debt has tripled since the provincial Liberals came to power. In the last budget presented by Ontario's Progressive Conservatives before the 2003 election, the debt was about $110 billion.

The overall size of the budget, meanwhile, has roughly doubled _ from $71 billion in 2003 to $141 billion this year.

Interest on debt is the fourth largest spending area, at $11.6 billion. It is also projected to be the fastest-growing spending area, at an average 3.6 per cent a year from 2015 to 2020, compared to an annual 3.3-per-cent increase in health and 2.8 per cent in education.

There is no plan in the Liberal budget to get the debt under control, said Progressive Conservative Leader Patrick Brown.

``We are spending more servicing the debt each year than we're spending on all transit and provincial highways, more than we're spending on the Ministry of Children and Youth Services...more than on care for seniors, more than investments in our post-secondary education, more than supporting northern communities,'' he said.

But Ontario Finance Minister Charles Sousa said debt is in fact being managed.

``A first step to managing debt is coming to balance,'' he said.

The debt-to-GDP ratio is improving, Sousa said, and the percentage of the budget that goes toward servicing the debt is considerably smaller than it has been in years.

``We've locked in those rates over long periods of time to minimize volatility and risk,'' he said.

The net-debt-to-GDP ratio is down to about 37.5 per cent from a high of roughly 40 per cent in recent years, but the government hopes to wrestle it down to pre-recession levels of 27 per cent by 2029-30. In the interim, the government has set a target of reducing that number to 35 per cent by 2023-24.

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Ontario's first balanced budget in decade promises billions in health care (OntBudget-Lockup)

Source: The Canadian Press
Apr 27, 2017 16:12

By Allison Jones

THE CANADIAN PRESS

TORONTO _ Ontario's Liberal government is promising to inject billions of new dollars into health care in its first balanced budget in a decade, a fiscal plan designed to appeal to nearly everyone in the province ahead of an election next summer.

Crafted by a party in power since 2003 that has been faring poorly in recent polls, the $141-billion budget has measures targeted at both young and old, people who access the health care system and anyone who owns or rents a home and pays an electricity bill.

The centrepiece of the plan is a $465-million-a-year pharmacare program for children and youth, which would cover prescription medications to treat most acute and common chronic conditions for people under age 25, with no deductible or co-payment. It would start Jan. 1.

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There is also $11 million over three years for a seniors community grant program and another $8 million over three years for new community centres with seniors' programming. The province has also earmarked $100 million over three years for a dementia strategy that will include helping patients and their caregivers find support and improve training for health-care workers.

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Highlights of the Ontario budget unveiled Thursday (OntBudget-Lockup-Highlig)
Source: The Canadian Press

Apr 27, 2017 16:13

By Paola Loriggio

THE CANADIAN PRESS

TORONTO _ ***Ontario*** 's finance minister delivered the province's fiscal plan Thursday, the government's first balanced budget in a decade. Here are the highlights:

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PHARMACARE FOR ***YOUTH***

More than 4,400 prescription drugs will be free for anyone under 25 starting next year under the province's new pharmacare program.

The program, dubbed OHIP+, is meant to provide universal drug coverage to ***children*** and ***youth*** regardless of family income.

It will cover all drugs currently available under the ***Ontario*** Drug Benefit program, with no co-payment or deductible.

The province says the new system will cost $465 million per fiscal year once it's up and running.

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HEALTH CARE 'BOOSTER SHOT'

Ontario has budgeted $11.5 billion in new health-care spending over the next three years, an amount that's $7 billion higher than the province had previously planned.

The so-called ``booster shot'' includes $1.3 billion to help cut wait times to see specialists, get key surgeries and access mental health services.

It also includes funds earmarked for hospital construction, such as new facilities in the Niagara and Windsor areas.

That spending will total $9 billion over a decade.

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GROWING DEBT

Despite reaching balance in its latest budget, ***Ontario*** 's debt continues to grow _ with projections putting it at $312 billion for 2017-2018.

The province's net debt is expected to rise to $336 billion in 2019-20.

Interest on debt is the fourth largest spending area, at $11.6 billion.

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CHILD CARE SPACES

Ontario is vowing to create 24,000 new licensed child care spots, 60 per cent of which would be government-subsidized.

That would come at a cost of $200 million.

The province says it has already created 56,000 licensed child care spaces in recent years.

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SCHOOL AND BEYOND

Ontario is vowing to build new schools in high-growth areas and help older facilities get a facelift.

The province is setting aside about $16 billion in the next decade for new construction as well as renovations and retrofits to make existing schools more energy-efficient.

Students are also getting a hand with work experience, with $190 million earmarked over three years to create 40,000 placements for them and for recent graduates.

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HELP FOR SENIORS

Getting around using public transit will be slightly cheaper for ***Ontario*** seniors, who will be able to get part of their transit expenses refunded under a new tax credit.

The program, which is slated to kick in on July 1, will cover 15 per cent of eligible transit costs, up to $130 per person annually.

It is expected to cost the province $10 million a year.

Money is also being set aside _ $8 million over three years _ for so-called elderly persons centres, which provide services such as meals on wheels and exercise classes.

The province's dementia strategy is also getting $100 million over three years to support residents with dementia and those who care for them.

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SUPPORT FOR INDIGENOUS RESIDENTS

Ontario 's budget includes a number of measures meant to help the province's indigenous communities access education and justice, among other things.

The government is spending $200 million over three years to boost postsecondary education and training opportunities for indigenous people.

Meanwhile, $44.2 million will be spent in the next two years to expand or establish programs to make the justice system more culturally relevant, including the Gladue Program, which encourages courts to consider non-custodial sentences for indigenous offenders.

Another $2 million will be spent in that same time frame to develop anti-racism programs that will be designed and delivered by indigenous people.

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TAXES ON TOBACCO, HOTEL STAYS

The Liberals are increasing tobacco taxes and giving municipalities the power to levy a hotel tax.

Tobacco tax rates will rise by $10 per carton of cigarettes over the next three years, starting with a $2 bump that takes effect at midnight.

As for the hotel tax, the budget provides few details, but it will require amendments to the Municipal Act and the City of Toronto Act, which gives the city the authority to levy its own taxes, but that has so far excluded hotels.

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LAND TRANSFER TAX REVENUE INCREASE

Southern ***Ontario*** 's booming housing market poured hundreds of millions more than expected into ***Ontario*** 's coffers last fiscal year.

It helped generate $637 million more than projected in land transfer tax revenue.

The land transfer tax is expected to bring in $3.1 billion this fiscal year.

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ONLINE PROTECTION PILOT PROJECT

Ontario wants to help its financial institutions improve their cybersecurity with a new $4-million pilot project.

The project will pair financial institutions with companies working in the cybersecurity sector.

The province says that will also help create high-tech jobs.

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OPPOSITION PARTIES REACT

Ontario 's opposition parties derided the Liberal government's budget.

Progressive Conservative Leader Patrick Brown says the fiscal plan is nothing but a ploy to win over voters ahead of next year's provincial election.

Ontario 's NDP Leader ***Andrea Horwath*** , meanwhile, says the budget does nothing to address the needs of cash-strapped families already struggling with hydro bills and housing costs.

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The Canadian Press explains the Ontario budget's health care funding (OntBudget-Lockup-HealthC)

Source: The Canadian Press
Apr 27, 2017 16:13

By Jessica Smith Cross

THE CANADIAN PRESS

TORONTO _ After years of restricting health-care funding growth, the Ontario budget released Thursday promises new money to reduce wait times and increase capacity at overcrowded hospitals, as well as free prescription medication for children and youth.

``BOOSTER SHOT''

The budget promises to increase health-care spending by a total of $11.5 billion over the next three years. The government had previously intended to keep annual health-spending increases low during this time, and the new so-called ``booster shot'' of funding is $7 billion higher than the previous plan.

Of that $7 billion, $1 billion is coming this budget year. Ontario will spend $53.8 billion on health care this year, up from $52.2 billion last year. Spending will rise to $58.1 billion in 2019-20, according to the budget plan.

This comes after the province's Financial Accountability Office warned that if the government continued with its plan to restrain health-care funding _ without the booster shot _ the level of austerity would have been the strictest in 20 years, and possibly unsustainable in the face of a growing and aging population.

The budget indicates $1.3 billion of the new funding will be dedicated to reducing wait times over the next three years.

OHIP+ CHILDREN AND YOUTH PHARMACARE

The biggest surprise policy announcement of the budget is free prescription medication for Ontarians under age 25. The pharmacare program will cover medication for all of the province's four million children, regardless of their family's income. It will be most beneficial for families that don't have work drug plans and aren't on social assistance.

It will cover the 4,400-plus drugs included in the Ontario Drug Benefit Program, which is used by seniors and those on social assistance. However, children's caregivers will not have to pay the deductibles and co-pay costs that those groups pay.

The program will cover common childhood medications including antibiotics, asthma inhalers, diabetes medication, attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder medication. It also includes oral cancer medication, while hospital-based medication is already free in Ontario.

The pharmacare program is set to begin on Jan. 1, 2018. The cost of its first full year is estimated at $465 million.

Earlier this month, the Ontario NDP announced plans for their own pharmacare program that, if the party is elected, would cover 125 basic medications for Ontarians of all ages.

HOSPITALS

The budget includes an increase of $518 million in hospital funding, a three-per-cent boost. It comes after hospitals warned of overcrowding and patients being placed in hallways, boardrooms and even cafeterias when there weren't enough beds. The Ontario Hospital Association had asked for a larger funding increase of 4.9 per cent.

The budget promises an extra $9 billion for hospital construction projects over 10 years, and announced newly approved hospital construction projects in Niagara, Windsor, Hamilton, Mississauga and the Weeneebayko hospital replacement project in northern Ontario, as well as a new $2.5 million for the planning of an expansion to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) in Toronto.

SENIOR HEALTH

The budget includes $100 million over three years for the province's new dementia strategy, which will include helping patients and their caregivers find support, and improving training and education for health-care workers in dementia care.

The budget includes an extra $58 million for long-term care homes, a two-per-cent increase. Residents' food allowance will increase by six per cent, which comes after negative news reports that the province spends more per capita on food for inmates than seniors in long-term care.

The budget also increases funding to Behavioural Supports Ontario by $10 million, which will help long-term care homes handle patients with complex behavioural issues related to dementia.

ABORTION PILL FUNDING

The budget promises a level of public funding for the new abortion pill Mifegymiso. It will be added to the Ontario Drug Benefit Plan, but those who don't have coverage under the public plan or a private plan will still pay out of pocket for the pill.

INDEX: HEALTH NATIONAL ONTARIO POLITICS

Ontario budget promises free prescription drugs for kids, more cash for hospitals; Ontario budget includes 3.1-per-cent hike to operating funding for hospitals (theglobeandmail.com)

Thu Apr 27 2017, 4:33pm ET

Section: Other

Byline: Kelly Grant

The Wynne government is lifting some of the financial pressure off Ontario's beleaguered health-care system with a budget that promises the largest health-spending boost in five years and free prescription drugs for kids, teens and young twenty-somethings.

The increase to the province's health budget includes a 3.1-per-cent hike to operating funding for hospitals, which falls short of the 4.9-per-cent increase the sector was seeking to alleviate overcrowding and emergency-room waiting times, but counts as a thaw after the province froze hospital budgets in four of the past five years.

The government is vowing to inject an additional $7-billion in new spending into health care over the next three years, plus billions more over the next decade for erecting new hospitals and rebuilding old ones, including five newly-announced projects in the Niagara area, Windsor, Hamilton, Mississauga and Northern Ontario.

Finance Minister Charles Sousa touted the increase as a "tremendous infusion of supports for more hospitals, more front-line care, more home care, more support for caregivers," but the opposition dismissed it as failing to meet patients' needs after years of forced austerity in the sector.

"While our hospitals are overcrowded and patients wait for days on stretchers in hallways, the announced hospital funding will barely keep up with the rate of inflation," said Andrea Horwath, Leader of the Ontario NDP.

The Liberals are planning to increase overall health spending by 3.3 per cent this year, about a percentage point more than the average annual increases in the lean years between 2011 and 2016.

However, this year's increase is still well below the amount health-care costs are expected to grow. The Financial Accountability Office of Ontario, which published a sobering report on the province's health-funding challenges in January, says inflation, population growth and population aging will drive health-sector expenses to grow by 5.3 per cent a year until 2020.

The centerpiece of the nearly $53.8-billion health budget is a $465-million program that will provide free prescription medicine to everyone 24 and under, regardless of their household income or whether they have access to private health insurance through their parents. It's the first program of its kind in Canada.

There will be no co-pays or deductibles under the program, which takes effect next January. It is expected to cost the province $465-million per year.

The Liberals' promise comes less than a week after Ms. Horwath unveiled her plan to expand public funding to cover a list of 125 "essential" medicines for everyone, and after Health Minister Eric Hoskins spent years lobbying for a national pharmacare strategy to no avail.

Mr. Sousa said he hopes Ontario's move will spur the federal government and other provinces to work toward establishing a national pharmacare program. In the meantime, Mr. Sousa said, the Liberals decided that covering all young people was a good place to start.

Right now, the province's public drug plans cover 2.3 million seniors, and about 900,000 people on social assistance. The new program, which the Liberals have dubbed OHIP-plus, would expand public coverage to another four million people.

Patrick Brown, the leader of the Progressive Conservatives, questioned whether paying for drugs for children whose parents are wealthy or already have private insurance is the best use of scare health-care resources.

"Under this plan, [those] precious funds would go to pay for millionaire kids," he said. "That doesn't seem right."

Public drug spending is expected to grow by 8.4 per cent this year, more than any other part of the health budget. That increase is not driven primarily by the expansion of pharmacare to young people because the program does not kick in until the last three months of the fiscal year.

The Liberals are also promising universal coverage for Mifegymiso, better known as the abortion pill.

Ontario's long-term care homes are slated to receive a 2-per-cent increase in operating funding, plus more for fresh meals, but there is no plan to add new nursing home beds.

Hospital leaders say that long queues for nursing homes beds in parts of the province are contributing to the overcapacity crisis in some of Ontario's hospitals, which saw a larger-than-usual surge in patients this winter. Patients designated as alternate level of care (ALC) - meaning they no longer need a bed in an acute-care hospital but have nowhere else to go - are blocking about 15 per cent of the hospital beds in the province.

The ALC problem can have a trickle-down effect, forcing doctors to treat patients in hallways or warehouse them in the emergency departments until beds open.

The Ontario Hospital Association, which represents about 150 hospitals, said before the budget was unveiled that funding increases of zero in four of the last five years had pushed hospitals to a breaking point. The province already has the fewest hospital beds per capita and shortest lengths of stay in the country. Only Quebec spends less per capita on health care.

Follow this link to view this story on globeandmail.com: (www.theglobeandmail.com»)

Length: 819 words

Tone: Neutral Neutral

Ontario Liberals unveil balanced budget that features free youth pharmacare plan (thestar.com)

Thu Apr 27 2017
Section: News | Toronto Star
Byline: Robert Benzie

Finance Minister Charles Sousa has prescribed a remedy for the Liberal government's political ailments - an election-ready balanced budget with free pharmacare for everyone 24 and under.

Sousa on Thursday tabled the first Ontario budget without a deficit since 2008 thanks to a growing economy that has led to a massive jump in tax revenue.

It's a record $141.1 billion spending plan that increases funding for health care by $7 billion over the next three years, including a signature $465 million children and youth pharmacare program that will pay for 4,400 different medications as of January 2018.

The Liberal plan comes just five days after NDP Leader Andrea Horwath promised a $475-million a year universal pharmacare plan to cover 125 commonly prescribed drugs if she wins the June 7, 2018 election and replaces **Premier Kathleen Wynne** .

Highlights from the 2017 budget((www.thestar.com»))

"Four years ago, our government promised to balance the budget and today... I am proud to announce that we did it," said Sousa, promising to keep things in the black again in 2018-19 and the year after that if the Liberals are re-elected.

The last time there was no shortfall in the provincial treasury was 2008 - just before the global financial crisis that led to the biggest recession since the Great Depression almost 90 years ago.

But the cost of running deficits for nearly a decade has been an Ontario debt that has ballooned from $169.6 billion in 2008 to a projected $311.9 billion this year, making the province the world's largest sub-national borrower.

"The road to balance has not been easy. We had critical choices to make," said Sousa.

"We could do what some suggested: cut expenses, cut vital programs and services that people depended on to eliminate the deficit or take a more principled and thoughtful approach to make strategic investments and stimulate economic growth," he said.

With the shortfall eliminated and a hotly contested election 13 months away, Sousa has loosened the purse strings and acknowledged that many Ontarians are feeling the pinch.

"We recognize that families are struggling with the increased cost of living so we're doing more to help with everyday costs," he said.

As first announced last month, residential electricity rates will be cut by an average 17 per cent starting in June - atop the 8 per cent reduction in the harmonized sales tax that kicked in on Jan. 1.

Overall, hydro relief measures will cost the treasury $1.4 billion in 2017-18.

The new spending is fuelled by tax revenue that has outpaced last year's forecast by more than $3.4 billion, including $1.3 billion in additional corporate taxes, $717 million in extra personal income taxes, $714 million more in sales taxes and a windfall of $637 million in increased land transfer taxes due to skyrocketing house prices.

To slow southern Ontario's rapidly rising real estate market, there's the recently announced 15 per cent "non-resident speculation tax" on foreign buyers. It is expected to be revenue neutral because it should be offset by lower land transfer tax proceeds.

"It's not fair for some speculators with deep pockets to drive up the cost of a family home at the expense of working families trying to save enough to realize their own dreams of a place to raise their kids and call their own," he said.

That levy on offshore speculators is the only tax increase in the budget aside from a $2-a-carton hike on tobacco effective as of midnight Thursday. (There is no mention in the budget about anticipated revenues from legalized recreational marijuana, which Ottawa will allow as of July 1, 2018, because the province has not yet determined where and how it will be sold or taxed.)

Municipalities, however, will be empowered to impose lodging taxes - on hotels and Airbnb rentals - if they choose.

Sousa boasted that the province is outpacing most of the developed world with gross domestic product growth of 2.7 per cent last year.

"That's almost twice the rate of growth of all of Canada - it's better than Germany's 1.9 per cent; it's better than the United States at 1.6 per cent; it's better than all G7 countries," said the treasurer.

But Progressive Conservative Leader Patrick Brown, who enjoys a double-digit lead over Wynne in public-opinion polls, insisted the budget was not balanced, claiming there is a $5 billion operational deficit due to one-time infusions of cash such as government land sales and the majority sell-off the Hydro One transmission utility.

"It's a scam. The numbers do not add up. The Liberals have no plan to get debt under control," said Brown, who declined to say what services he would cut if elected next year though he stressed his opposition to municipal hotel taxes.

The NDP's Horwath, whose pharmacare proposal would not take effect until 2020, said "this budget doesn't even come close to undoing the damage Kathleen Wynne and her Liberals have done over the last 14 years."

"Ontarians are desperate for change," she said, blasting Wynne for falling short on universal pharmacare.

"We didn't get the pharmacare plan that the people of this province deserve."

More on the 2017 Ontario budget((www.thestar.com»))

Illustration:
• The Ontario Liberals have balanced the province's books for the first time in almost a decade. In it, there will be a $7 billion hike in health care funding over the next three years The Ontario Liberals have balanced the province's books for the first time in almost a decade.

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