

Making Life More Affordable in Ontario

*Government Affordability Package Takes Aim at Rising Cost of Living
in a Changing Economy*

NEWS

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Ontario is taking steps to help families afford the costs of caring for children and seniors, highlighting a package of measures that are easing the financial pressures people are facing in today's rapidly changing economy.

The Premier was at the EarlyON child and family centre at St. Paul Catholic School today to talk with families about the way uncertainty in the economy is impacting their ability to care for their loved ones and keep up with the bills, and hear how the package of supports the government has announced is helping. Recent changes the government has made to make life more affordable for families at every stage include:

- The introduction of OHIP+ to make prescription medications free for everyone under the age of 25, which has already provided over one million people with 2.3 million free prescriptions
- Qualifying more seniors for lower prescription drug costs under the Ontario Drug Benefit program, free shingles vaccine for seniors aged 65 to 70 and expanded funding to cover the costs of fertility services
- Building on the savings that families get from Full-Day Kindergarten, providing more Ontario children with high-quality care with a commitment to helping 100,000 more kids access licensed child care and offer additional financial support for families by providing subsidies for approximately 60 per cent of all new spaces
- 25 per cent off hydro bills as part of the Fair Hydro Plan, with extra support for rural and low-income families
- Free tuition at colleges and universities for more than 225,000 students, and more generous, non-repayable grants for students whose families earn up to \$175,000
- An enhancement to the first-time homebuyers refund, expanding rent control to private market rental units in Ontario, and a Fair Housing Plan that has helped the housing market rebalance
- A public transit tax credit that saves seniors up to \$450 and fare integration measures that have lowered the cost of commuting when transferring to and from the TTC and GO/UP Express network by about \$700 per year for the average commuter
- Thousands of dollars available in rebates and financial support for homeowners who make energy-efficient upgrades, supported by the proceeds of Ontario's carbon market.

When factors like age, number of children and household earnings are taken into account, these steps add up to hundreds and in many cases thousands of dollars of savings per family per year. The Premier highlighted the steps taken to date in order to underline the need for government to do more to support caregivers and families.

Making life more affordable is part of Ontario's plan to create fairness and opportunity during this period of rapid economic change. The plan includes a higher minimum wage and better working conditions, free tuition for hundreds of thousands of students, easier access to affordable child care, and free prescription drugs for everyone under 25 through the biggest expansion of medicare in a generation.

QUOTES

"Families are facing mounting pressures — whether at work or on their commute or in their pocketbook — and it's having a real impact in people's lives and our ability to care for our loved ones. That's something I care about deeply. I believe in an Ontario where together, we care. And I see it as government's job to step up and make that possible by making life fairer and more affordable for families. That's what we've been doing and it's work that we will build on in this month's Budget."

— Kathleen Wynne, Premier of Ontario

QUICK FACTS

- Over 225,000 people, or 40 per cent of all college and university students, are getting free tuition this year for the first time ever, and 95 percent of all OSAP recipients are now receiving grants that they do not have to pay back.
- According to the Parliamentary Budget Office, out-of-pocket drug expenses were \$314 for the average Ontario household in 2015. By making prescription drugs free for people under the age of 25, OHIP+ has already reduced out-of-pocket drugs costs for more than one million Ontarians.
- Full-Day Kindergarten saves families up to \$6,500 a year per child.
- The GreenON fund is providing 150,000 homes with professionally installed smart thermostats and in-home energy reviews at no cost. Every Ontario resident is also eligible for \$100 off the purchase of a smart thermostat, helping families lower their monthly energy bills and fight climate change.
- Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan is delivering monthly savings of \$41 for a typical urban ratepayer and greater savings for northern and rural customers.

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