

- What we are trying to do with this budget and as a government is speak to the very real concerns that people in Ontario have right now
- Yes, our economy is in a strong position and our budget is balanced—these are good things and I'd like to thank Minister Sousa for his hard work getting us here
- But the reality is that we both know people are anxious about their jobs and their futures
- They worry about the soaring cost of housing, the rise in part-time work and decline in benefits
- So what you're seeing today is the foundation of our plan to address these anxieties
- There's no better place to start than investing in health care—and we've invested deeply
- OHIP+ will give everyone 24 years old and under free access to prescription drugs, filling a serious gap that's been created because so many jobs no longer provide this coverage for families—it's the biggest change to Medicare in Ontario in a generation
- We are investing in major capital hospital projects around the province and giving a big boost to hospital operating budgets which is going to mean lower wait times
- We're investing in education—right through the system, starting with more child care spaces
- And we're making university and college tuition absolutely free for 210,000 students, while others from middle-class homes will have much lower levels of student debt
- We are also focusing on those areas that will help make life more affordable through initiatives like our Fair Housing Plan and Fair Hydro Plan
- With this balanced budget we have the freedom and flexibility to respond to the new challenges people are facing in this new world
- We must make the right choices now to support the people of Ontario as we all navigate this turbulence and set our province on a course toward long-term success and I see this budget as the foundation for that
- There are some who look at this new world and say that government should just step back and stay out of it—let the market sort itself out—but those are not my values
- I believe there is a need for government to stand up and play an active role in building a fair society where there is more opportunity for everyone and more security too
- We cannot be idle or complacent where it comes to our economy and to trade
- We cannot simply assume that the jobs of tomorrow will be available to Ontarians
- This is the time for us to be focused, fair, and bold—to not simply describe and reassert our values, but to defend them and act on them
- That's what we've done with this budget and what you will continue to see us do over the days and months ahead