

MEDIA SCAN: BUDGET

May 2, 2017

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ONLINE COVERAGE

TORONTO STAR: ONTARIO CUTS FUNDING FOR TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY

thestar.com

Tue May 2 2017

Section: News | Toronto Star

Byline: David Rider

The Ontario government is cutting a \$700,000 annual grant to Toronto Public Library to operate a "virtual reference library," a move the chief librarian warns will curtail some services.

Vickery Bowles warned city manager Peter Wallace, in an email obtained by the Star, of the cut to "funding that has been received annually for almost the past 20 years, although flat-lined" in recent years.

"This represents \$1.4 million with an in-year 2017 budget cut of \$700,000 and the remaining \$700,000 in 2018."

The cut appears to relate to a recent provincial announcement of a \$1 million investment in rural, remote and indigenous libraries, she wrote. "We applaud this much-needed investment," Bowles added. "However, this corresponding reduction in funding at TPL cannot be absorbed and there will be service impacts.

"This provincial funding is a major source of revenue for TPL's digitization program including content development, web development, and online services for all Ontarians" who can access, Bowles wrote, the Toronto reference library's vast collections of historical materials.

At Queen's Park, Culture Minister Eleanor McMahon said TPL's base funding "is not being touched whatsoever." She acknowledged funding for the virtual reference library, operated by the city for the province, is being cut.

"This program has seen fewer and fewer users and so we've decided to make those investments in a different way," she told reporters at Queen's Park. "With the advances in technology, we've made a decision to diminish it and to invest the funding in innovation across Ontario."

Mayor John Tory told reporters he'll ask the province to review and hopefully reverse the decision.

"You can't take \$700,000 out of a library budget and not have an impact," said Tory, who has been in a war of words with Premier Kathleen Wynne over her 2017 budget's lack of funds for social housing repairs.

McMahon argued the decision is "not at all" a slap in the face for Toronto. She said the city was notified last year of the pending change, although Bowles's email suggests she was caught off guard by the news.

NDP Leader Andrea Horwath was not buying McMahon's reasoning.

"Once again the city of Toronto is being shortchanged by the Liberal government," Horwath said.

With files from Rob Ferguson

TORONTO STAR: PREMIER KATHLEEN WYNNE BLASTS JOHN TORY OVER HIS BUDGET COMPLAINTS

thestar.com

Tue May 2 2017

Section: News | Toronto Star

Byline: Robert Benzie

It turns out you can fight city hall.

Just ask Premier Kathleen Wynne, who is escalating her feud with Toronto Mayor John Tory after his complaints that last Thursdays' provincial budget did not do enough for the city.

"There are statements being made out of city hall that are simply not true," Wynne told reporters Tuesday at Lakeridge Health Centre in Oshawa.

"I need to have honest and fact-based debates and conversations with all of the municipal leaders around the province," she said.

Her comments came after Tory took a campaign-style tour of a west-end community housing complex and distributed pamphlets claiming Queen's Park is neglecting residents by ignoring a city demand to cover a third of social housing repairs totaling \$864 million.

"There's a strong political overtone to it, which I think is counterproductive. That's my opinion," said Wynne, who is clearly unhappy that Tory is playing footsy with Progressive Conservative Leader Patrick Brown.

"We are talking about issues that shouldn't be partisan. We should also talk about the evidence and the reality of the investments that we are making together," the premier said.

At city hall, Tory stressed that "I didn't ever say nor would I want it ever portrayed that I was campaigning against anybody."

"I was campaigning for the tenants of Toronto Community Housing and for justice for those neighbourhoods, which are many across the city, and for the notion of Liberal MPPs speaking up on behalf of city of Toronto residents and TCH residents," he said

"I saw today that I was being accused of being political and partisan - nothing could be further from the truth."

The mayor, a former Progressive Conservative leader, insisted he does not want to increase tensions with the province.

"I've tried very hard not to engage in that sort of language and if I have ever done it I apologize because it's not my intention," said Tory.

"I want to have - and believe I will have going forward with Premier Kathleen Wynne - a very good relationship," he said.

"She has a deep concern in her heart for the well-being of the people who live in Toronto Community Housing, some of our poorest and most vulnerable citizens who are just needing a bit of a hand-up from us and they should have the dignity to live in properly repaired houses."

Tensions have been high between the two leaders and one-time allies - since Wynne kyboshed Tory's plan to slap tolls on the Gardiner Expressway and the Don Valley Parkway.

But his complaint that the Liberals, who hold 20 of 23 city seats, are shortchanging Toronto have rankled the premier.

"So when the mayor says that we have not stepped up on transit spending I can give you the long list of projects that are in the ground and I can assure you that the \$150 million that is already in place to do the study on the downtown relief line that's a future project," she said.

"It's just not true that we haven't stepped up. Likewise, it's just not true that we haven't stepped up on housing."

Wynne noted "there's \$130 million coming from our climate change plan to retrofit social housing units."

"There's \$340 million that will be in the hands of the city of Toronto to deal with homelessness and provide rent supplements and so on and there's another \$130 million specifically for affordable and social housing."

Brown, meanwhile, told Matt Galloway on CBC's Metro Morning that he would be a better partner for Toronto than Wynne.

However, the Conservative leader said he would not allow the municipality to impose any new taxes or tolls.

He stressed that his party would unveil its plans for dealing with the city after a November policy conference and before the June 7, 2018 election.

With files from Betsy Powell

TORONTO STAR: SHAME ON TORONTO'S PUBLIC HOUSING NEGLIGENCE

thestar.com

Tue May 2 2017

Section: Opinion | Editorial Coverage | T

Byline: Alan Broadbent

Toronto city council and its mayor are closing more than 400 units of city-owned social housing because they are in poor condition. They've identified another 17,000 units in bad repair that are at risk of being closed if nothing is done to fix them. In the case of the 400 units, the mayor and council decided not to fix them. And they have made no decision to fix the rest of the unfit units, which account for 30 per cent of the Toronto Community Housing stock.

The reasons they give are financial: we can't afford to fix these units. Someone else would have to give us the money to do it, some other government most likely. They plead penury while they choose the most expensive transit option for a one-stop Scarborough subway that makes no sense outside of a city hall and Queen's Park political bubble, and the most expensive possible option for redevelopment of the eastern Gardiner Expressway.

Mayor Tory assured people he was working hard on the issues of housing and homelessness in an email he circulated to his fellow condominium residents on the recent occasion of the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP) "sleepover" at their building. It's an assurance he has uttered on other occasions. He seems to be working hard against these issues by reducing available social housing stock, rather than fixing it.

Affordable, safe and secure housing is identified by the United Nations as a basic human right (the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights). Housing is not some budgetary afterthought.

Canada is a signatory to these UN documents and by doing so commits the federal government, as well as all subnational governments, including city governments. This means the state agrees to support the right of all people living in it to affordable, good quality housing with protections against arbitrary eviction.

The UN does not expect such housing to be built overnight, but does expect each state to make steady progress toward the goal of housing everyone, either through the marketplace or by state initiative. This process is called "progressive realization." States are intended to set a goal for full realization of a right, to construct a plan to get there, and to monitor its progress effectively.

Reducing available housing does the exact opposite. It is moving further away from the goal, having no plan, and abandoning monitoring.

This is not new behaviour for Toronto's city council, or for most other governments in Canada. Their abandonment of the right to housing has resulted in subpar social housing and long waiting lists.

In Toronto's case the waiting list has climbed to nearly 200,000 people. This is not even including the people paying too much of their income for housing in the private market, well above the 25 to 30 per cent considered reasonable. Governments have decided they could not afford to maintain existing stock, build new stock, or find another way to subsidize people being

housed properly. These choices have helped construct the poverty so many people find themselves in.

If these politicians made the choice to support people's right to housing, they would have to solve the problem of where to find the money.

They might have to find the courage to raise taxes despite it not being popular.

They might have to set conditions on developers to provide more affordable housing in developments, rather than let them avoid it.

They might have to make harder political choices around affordable transit options and other infrastructure projects, freeing up money for housing.

They might, as former Toronto mayor John Sewell recently said, have to show some leadership.

Instead, they take refuge in crying poor, or in some cases claiming that social and economic rights in Canada aren't "justiciable" (that is, they can't be pursued through the courts), an evasion the UN claims is unacceptable. A country can't sign an agreement and then deliberately construe a way to avoid living up to it. Canada is rightly condemned for such hypocrisy.

And so should Toronto council and its mayor be condemned for their failure to meet their human rights obligation. Their catastrophic failure on the affordable housing file shames them all.

Alan Broadbent is chairman and CEO of Avana Capital Corporation and chairman of the Maytree Foundation.

TORONTO STAR: SHELLEY CARROLL GETS LIBERAL NOMINATION IN DON VALLEY NORTH

thestar.com

Tue May 2 2017

Section: News | Toronto Star

Byline: Robert Benzie

Premier Kathleen Wynne has appointed Toronto city councillor Shelley Carroll to be the Liberal candidate in the new riding of Don Valley North.

Carroll (Ward 33 Don Valley East) will be the governing party's standard-bearer in the June 7, 2018 provincial election.

"Shelley has a fantastic track record of supporting our shared work to invest in Toronto transit, childcare, and education," Wynne, a long-time ally, said in a statement Tuesday.

"I am delighted to have her experience and expertise on our team. She's the kind of person we need at Queen's Park," the premier said.

The former city budget chief said she's "thrilled to take this next step in my career of public service."

It was not immediately clear if Carroll would remain as a city councillor during the provincial election, or if she would run again municipally if she loses in Don Valley North.

Her move comes as Queen's Park and city hall are at odds, with Wynne and Mayor John Tory sparring daily over the recent provincial budget.

"The Ontario Liberal government is an amazing partner for the city of Toronto, whether through the massive amounts of funding to build transit across the city, or else the critical work to invest in our schools, hospitals, and other vital public services," said Carroll

"I got into politics to oppose Conservative cuts and I am so grateful for the work the Ontario Liberal government has done and continues to do to rebuild our public services, including right here in Toronto."

Carroll, who would have faced a nomination challenge for the newly drawn riding, is the first candidate appointed by Wynne for the 2018 election.

Under the Liberal constitution, the leader is allowed to name up to five candidates without a nomination meeting.

Due to the rising population, there will be up to 124 ridings in the next election, an increase from the 107 currently represented at the Legislature.

TORONTO STAR: TRILLIUM HOSPITALS WILL GET MORE BEDS AS PART OF LIBERAL BUDGET PLAN

thestar.com

Mon May 1 2017

Section: News | Toronto Star

Byline: Rob FergusonRobert Benzie

The Trillium hospital system will get 500 more beds at its Mississauga and Queensway locations as part of the Ontario government's \$9-billion budget for new health care centres.

Premier Kathleen Wynne said the projects at Trillium are desperately needed to meet demand as more and more people move into the area.

"The growth that is happening in this region is huge," she told reporters after a campaign-style announcement about the redevelopment, which will include a tower for acute-care patients at the Mississauga site along with a new emergency room and more operating rooms.

Wynne, Finance Minister Charles Sousa - who represents a Mississauga riding - and Health Minister Eric Hoskins stood on a stage before more than a dozen hospital workers in a hot and crowded auditorium at the Mississauga site with cheering staff to tout Trillium as one of five new or redeveloped hospitals across the province in last Thursday's budget.

She credited Trillium chief executive Michelle DiEmanuele with setting the positive tone.

"There's a lot of energy in this place," said Wynne, who has been running behind Progressive Conservative Leader Patrick Brown in public opinion polls with 13 months to go until the June 7, 2018 election.

"Most of the people in that room are not partisan ... we can't predict how they're going to vote," the premier added.

"It's not an election for them. It's about making sure they get the investment that they need."

The Liberals have been hoping to turn the corner on their low popularity, promising to cut skyrocketing hydro rates 25 per cent by summer, bringing in rent controls on all residential buildings and a 15-per cent foreign buyers tax to cool an overheated housing market.

In addition, last week's budget included a \$475-million annual pharmacare plan covering 4,400 medicines for everyone 24 and under starting in January.

DiEmanuele, a former senior civil servant at Queen's Park, said the money for redevelopment at Trillium "really does set us up nicely."

The 500 beds include 150 at the Trillium site near Sherway Gardens for rehabilitation and complex continuing care.

A new Queensway Health Centre near Sherway Gardens will get a renovated and expanded urgent care centre - to divert patients from emergency rooms for less serious health problems - and new beds for rehabilitation and complex continuing care, freeing up beds at the Credit Valley hospital site also operated by Trillium.

The Trillium system treats 1.6 million patients a year, including 273,000 in the emergency room, making it one of the busiest in Canada.

Other new or redeveloped hospitals were awarded to Hamilton, Niagara, Windsor and Moosonee as part of the \$9 billion in funding in last week's budget.

At Queen's Park, New Democrat MPP John Vanthof complained that "operating funding for hospitals is \$300 million short of what the hospitals say they needed."

"That means that our community hospitals will continue to be squeezed, patients will continue to be treated in hallways and northern and rural hospitals will continue to be forced to cut the services that people count on," said Vanthof (Timiskaming-Cochrane).

"Hospital budgets have been frozen for years. A 2 per cent increase is basically inflation. That's nothing to crow about. Giving inflationary costs to the base budget isn't exactly a huge gift. So the people who are in hallways and the surgeries that are being cancelled are not going to be corrected by simply an inflationary increase."

Hoskins, at the announcement in Mississauga, said some hospitals will get more than the minimum 2 per cent as part of a \$500-million boost to funding for hospitals to cover day-to-day operating costs.

Correction - May 2, 2017: This article was edited from a previous version that mistakenly said Trillium Hospitals will get 650 beds at its Mississauga and Queensway locations.

GLOBE AND MAIL: *IN THE SPITTING MATCH BETWEEN TORONTO AND ONTARIO, NOBODY WINS; RELATIONS BETWEEN JOHN TORY AND KATHLEEN WYNNE, ONCE SMILING CHUMS, HAVE TURNED INTO AN ONGOING SPITTING MATCH*

theglobeandmail.com

Tue May 2 2017, 7:41pm ET

Section: Other

Byline: MARCUS GEE

When an election is coming up, voters expect to see more posturing, quarrelling, theatrics and general nonsense from those who wish to lead them. But seldom do things get quite so silly as the current spitting match between the mayor of Toronto and the government of Ontario.

Relations between Mayor John Tory and Premier Kathleen Wynne, once smiling chums, have been chilly since Ms. Wynne pulled the rug out from under Mr. Tory by denying him the right to place tolls on two Toronto expressways.

Complaining that he felt like a little boy in short pants whenever he went looking for some help from Queen's Park, Mr. Tory demanded that Ms. Wynne atone by giving Toronto, well, just about everything it wanted, including more money for public housing.

When the recent provincial budget came out, Mr. Tory acted shocked almost beyond words that a government with more than \$300-billion in debt had not handed over enough money for Toronto's massive housing repair bill.

Except that this mayor is never beyond words. In this budget, he said, the Liberal government turned its back on the city, failing to meet "the most crucial needs of the people." Driving home the point, he handed out leaflets urging public-housing residents to call their local MPP to press for more housing help.

Now it was Ms. Wynne's turn to act affronted. Her Transportation Minister, Steven Del Duca, trooped down to City Hall in high dudgeon and addressed reporters right outside Mr. Tory's office. The mayor, he said, had gone "over the line" with his leafleting expedition.

On Tuesday, the Premier herself said there was a "strong political overtone" to Mr. Tory's actions and insisted that her government had been more than generous to Toronto - the most generous ever, in fact.

Even Patrick Brown, Leader of the Progressive Conservatives, got into the free-for-all. Meeting Mr. Tory at City Hall, he said that unlike those mean old Liberals, he would be a partner Toronto "can trust and rely on." Better than that, "We will fight for the city of Toronto."

No one came out of this flurry of finger-pointing looking good. Mr. Tory was dreaming if he really thought that Ms. Wynne would ride to his rescue with a sack of gold for public housing in this budget. Toronto's plea for more housing money goes back years and it is not likely to get all it needs overnight, if ever.

Though Ms. Wynne was cowardly to deny Mr. Tory his highway tolls, after at first signaling he would get them, recent Liberal governments have been pretty good to Toronto overall, committing billions for transit and taking back responsibility for some of the spending downloaded to the city by earlier governments.

As Ms. Wynne protested, "It's just not true that we haven't stepped up." If anything, the Liberals have spent too much, leaving future taxpayers a crushing tab.

Ms. Wynne and her people, though, went over the line themselves when they suggested that Mr. Tory was on some kind of partisan mission. This is a tired, desperate government that is behind in the polls and facing annihilation in next year's provincial election. They are seeing plots around every corner.

Even if he was expecting too much, Mr. Tory was merely fighting the city's corner when he criticized the budget, not making an unholy alliance with Mr. Brown.

Mr. Tory may be a former PC leader at Queen's Park, but he has been careful not to play partisan politics since he's been at City Hall. He will talk to anyone he thinks might help the city.

Mr. Brown's intervention may have been the silliest of all. The man who claims he wants to be Toronto's champion is against giving Toronto a hotel tax, as Ms. Wynne would, and against the tolls Mr. Tory wanted. As for housing, his commitment so far extends to "being one of the funding partners," as he put it on CBC Radio.

Mr. Brown says, correctly, that the Liberals have been reckless big spenders. Does anyone really think, given his commitment to reining in provincial spending, that he will be more open-handed with Toronto?

The whole episode had a sour quality. You didn't give us what we wanted! Yes we did! Did not. Did, too.

Both Queen's Park and City Hall have big money problems. Like two old men carving up their last bean, they fall to squabbling and blaming. It's unseemly, it's ridiculous and it doesn't help anyone.

TORONTO SUN: ONTARIO'S 'BALANCED' BUDGET STILL ADDING TO OUR DEBT

By: Ben Eisen, Special To The Toronto Sun

Updated: Tuesday, May 02, 2017 05:47 PM EDT

<http://www.torontosun.com/2017/05/02/ontarios-balanced-budget-still-adding-to-our-debt>

Ontario Finance Minister Charles Sousa announced last Thursday that after nine straight deficits, the government's operating budget would finally be balanced for the coming fiscal year.

Some people might assume that when their government says the budget is balanced, that means the government isn't adding any more debt.

But that's not the case.

In fact, governments can (and often do) add significant new debt to their books even during years when the operating budget is balanced.

Confused? Don't be. Here's how they do it.

The government separates capital spending on infrastructure from its operating budget, for accounting purposes.

Although the government will stop adding new debt from spending on day-to-day operations such as salaries, programs and income transfers, it will continue adding new debt from spending on long-term projects such as roads and bridges.

But in a highly indebted province such as Ontario, it's important to pay attention to all new debt added to government books — not just debt from the operating budget.

Ultimately, the interest payments on all debt, whether it comes from capital spending or day-to-day expenditures, must be repaid by the same taxpayer.

Given that the Ontario government has seen its net debt approximately double over the past decade to over \$300 billion, and it already holds more debt than any other sub-national government in the world, further increases in debt should be taken seriously.

So let's look at the numbers, with an eye on last week's budget.

Over the past three years, Ontario's net debt has increased by \$34.8 billion.

Over the next three years, the province expects to add \$34.0 billion in debt—almost exactly the same amount.

In this context, the government's rhetoric — that a balanced operating budget has dawned a new fiscal day and the province can now afford to spend more freely — rings hollow.

The reality isn't just that Ontario has failed to stop adding to its debt.

In fact, the rate of debt accumulation hasn't even slowed down noticeably from recent years.

So who will bear the cost of all this debt accumulation?

You, the taxpayer. And that cost is significant.

This year, the government expects to spend \$11.6 billion just paying interest on its debt.

None of this money pays down any debt, it merely services the debt we already have.

By comparison, the province now spends about \$8.4 billion on post-secondary education and training.

In other words, it spends more of your tax dollars servicing its debt than it does educating young people in our college and universities.

And debt charges are expected to keep climbing — from \$11.6 billion this year to \$12.6 billion two years from now.

In fact, over the next three years, provincial debt charges are expected to be the fastest growing major spending category in the provincial budget.

More and more money will be eaten up by interest payments, leaving less and less for other priorities such as health care, education or tax relief.

Ontario remains a heavily indebted province and, despite a balanced budget, the accumulation of debt has not stopped— it hasn't even slowed down.

Today's taxpayers, as well as future generations of Ontarians, are, and will be, stuck with the bill.

Eisen is director of the Fraser Institute's Ontario Prosperity Initiative. This column is co-authored by Charles Lammam, the Fraser Institute's director of fiscal studies.

TORONTO SUN: TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY FUNDING BEING CUT BY \$1.4M: MEMO

By: Shawn Jeffords, Toronto Sun

Updated: Tuesday, May 02, 2017 08:06 PM EDT

<http://www.torontosun.com/2017/05/02/toronto-public-library-funding-being-cut-by-20-memo>

The Ontario government has slashed funding to the Toronto Public Library by \$1.4 million, according to a memo obtained by Ontario's New Democrats.

The document, a message from Toronto's City Librarian Vickery Bowles to Toronto City Manager Peter Wallace, lays out the cut in stark detail. The city's public library system will lose that \$1.4 million over the next two years. Bowles writes that it appears to correspond with a \$1 million investment in rural, remote and Indigenous libraries across Ontario.

"We applaud this much-needed investment," Bowles writes of the decision to fund those libraries. "However, this corresponding reduction in funding at TPL cannot be absorbed and there will be service impacts."

Asked about the cut Tuesday, Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport Eleanor McMahon defended the decision. The money was paid to Toronto to help make its "virtual reference library" available across the province. Those services are "under-utilized" so the funding was cut, she said.

"The base funding for the City of Toronto library is not being touched whatsoever," she said. "That funding remains intact."

NDP leader Andrea Horwath called it another "poke in the eye" to Toronto after it was passed over for transit and social housing funding in last week's provincial budget.

"I think the province is out of touch with what's happening with the city," Horwath said. "I think these alarm bells that have been sounded by the mayor for some time now - this is not new - have been largely ignored by the premier."

Mayor John Tory said he just found out about the funding cut Tuesday. It will hurt services and he hopes the decision can be reversed, he said.

"You can't take \$700,000 out of the library budget and not have an impact," he said. "The irony here is that the area that is most directly affected by this grant being reduced ... is where our library system helps other libraries across Ontario to have access digitally to content."

TORONTO SUN: LIBERALS LEAVING TORONTO TO FEND FOR ITSELF

By: Sue-Ann Levy, Toronto Sun

Updated: Tuesday, May 02, 2017 06:28 PM EDT

<http://www.torontosun.com/2017/05/02/liberals-leaving-toronto-to-fend-for-itself>

Toronto city councillor Shelley Carroll clearly had already swallowed the Liberal Kool-Aid when she offered herself up as the party's candidate Tuesday in the new riding of Don Valley North.

She told the media the Liberal government is an "amazing partner" with Toronto, and has contributed a tremendous amount towards the construction of new transit in the city - in addition to rebuilding public services.

Perhaps the ever ambitious Carroll missed the provincial budget launch last Thursday or is still trying to understand that mounting debt creates a heap of new servicing costs (a point she seemed to continually wrestle with as the former budget chief under Mayor David Miller).

Still, I have no clue what she's talking about and I'm certain Mayor John Tory would agree.

In fact, either Carroll didn't read city manager Peter Wallace's April 28 synopsis of how Toronto fared (or rather didn't fare) vis-a-vis the Ontario budget, or she chose to ignore it, or the script handed to her by the Wynne Liberals on Tuesday offered an alternate reality (which an ambitious councillor would gladly accept.)

I was not a fan of road tolls when Tory introduced them late last fall. I considered them another tax.

Having said that, Carroll's would-be leader, Kathleen Wynne, convinced the mayor to expend the political capital to pursue the tolls and once he got council approval (and a fair amount of pushback from Conservative commentators), she threw him under the proverbial bus.

Deciding purely for political expediency to save seats in the 905-area code, Wynne decided not to approve the tolls this past January (tolls which would have given the city \$200 million a year).

One would expect, as the mayor did, that Wynne would make up for her sudden politically motivated change of heart in the 2017 budget.

But other than tossing out a few crumbs on programs that are near and dear to the debt-plagued, cash-strapped Wynne government - child care, poverty reduction, youth training, climate change - there was no new money for the issues that really matter to Torontonians.

Sure, the city will be allowed to charge a hotel tax which, when fully implemented, will give them \$15 million a year. The proceeds of the vacancy tax is yet to be determined.

But they're mere crumbs.

Let's start with transit. There was no pledge to assist with a sorely needed \$6-billion downtown relief line.

On the \$3.3-billion one-stop Scarborough subway, there was no mention of whether the province will commit to the full \$2 billion expected from the city.

(I guess that's a "No.")

The only contribution will come from a doubled share of the gas tax, which will give the city \$642 million a year by 2021-22. I repeat, by 2021-22.

That's four budget years away and with any luck, Wynne won't be Premier by then.

It's little wonder the city can't get on with planning for future transit when they're dealing with a government that doesn't honour its word and doles out money like an allowance.

Ditto for social housing. I have sat in many a TCHC meeting where the talk turns to capital repairs and the 10-year, \$2.6-billion capital plan to try to get ahead of the backlog.

The idea was for the city, province and the feds to each pony up one-third.

To date the city has fulfilled its commitment and the feds have given some money.

The province? Not one red cent.

So much for poverty reduction.

So much for Carroll's claims that public services have been rebuilt by her would-be leader.

I can't figure which is crumbling faster: Toronto's infrastructure or Wynne's integrity.

CBC NEWS: PROVINCE TO CUT \$1.4M FROM TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY FUNDING

CBC.CA News

Tue May 2 2017, 4:28pm ET

Section: Toronto

Byline: CBC News

The provincial government is cutting \$1.4 million in funding to the Toronto Public Library, a move the chief librarian says will have an impact on services.

The funding had been dedicated for each of the past 20 years to the library's digitization program, helping to provide online access to historic materials from the 19th century onward.

- You can borrow WiFi hotspots from libraries in low-income neighbourhoods
- Toronto library workers reach last-minute deal to prevent strike

The cut to the Toronto Public Library (TPL) comes shortly after the Wynne government announced in last week's budget an extra \$1 million for digitization at rural, remote and Indigenous libraries.

"This corresponding reduction in funding at TPL cannot be absorbed and there will be service impacts," chief librarian Vickery Bowles wrote Monday to City Manager Peter Wallace in an email obtained by CBC News.

"This provincial finding is a major source of revenue for TPL's digitization program including content development, web development and online services for all Ontarians."

The funding is being reduced by \$700,000 this year, and by \$1.4 million in 2018, equalling 20 per cent of the province's annual grant to the library. TPL operates on a total annual budget of \$198 million, the bulk of the money coming from the city.

NDP leader Andrea Horwath challenged the Liberals about the issue in Question Period on Tuesday.

"Why, if they are so proud of their support of libraries, are they on the other hand cutting funding to the Toronto Public Library?" Horwath said.

Tourism, Culture and Sport Minister Eleanor McMahon said some of the funding the province provided to the digitization project was unspent.

"Fewer and fewer and fewer people were going to the site," McMahon told reporters at the Legislature. "Since it was being under-utilized, we talked to (TPL) about scaling it back and our need to take that funding and leverage it elsewhere in the province."

CBC NEWS: LIBERAL BUDGET IGNORES RING OF FIRE, SAYS MPP MANTHA

CBC.CA News

Tue May 2 2017, 8:22am ET

Section: Sudbury

Byline: CBC News

With no mention of the Ring of Fire in this year's provincial or federal budgets, Algoma-Manitoulin MPP Michael Mantha says the government needs to re-reassess its priorities.

The New Democrat says he fears the lack of progress will scare investors away from the province.

- Ring of Fire mining development still years away from delivering on a decade of hype
- Noront Resources waits for road to the Ring of Fire

"This is a once in a lifetime opportunity that we have here, and it's not highlighted in our budget?," Mantha said.

"I believe that there are some priorities that need to be changed between both levels of government, and that's going to happen with a new government coming into 2018."

The Ring of Fire is the name of a large mineral deposit in the James Bay lowlands. But accessing the chromite and other metals has been difficult since there isn't any infrastructure leading to the remote area.

- 'Cease and desist,' Neskantaga First Nation tells Ring of Fire mining company
- Using sex to sell Ring of Fire mining project called 'absurd' by industry group

"People are looking at Ontario as having bounties of resources, but we're still trying to develop a plan in order to move it forward," Mantha said.

"We have no established framework. Industry doesn't know how they're going to invest. Where is the process? How do we get there?"

Representatives from Marten Falls First Nation are heading to China this month to discuss building a rail line to the Ring of Fire.

CBC NEWS: ONTARIO BUDGET LEAVES MERCURY EXPERT WORRIED ABOUT 'DEJA VU ALL OVER AGAIN'

CBC.CA News

Tue May 2 2017, 7:00am ET

Section: Thunder Bay

Byline: CBC News

A team of scientists set to resume field work on the mercury contamination in Ontario's English-Wabigoon River next week is worried their work may be shelved.

The concern comes after the provincial budget last week allocated just \$2.1 million dollars to fund "pre-remediation work" on the river ? far short of the millions needed to clean up the decades-old industrial pollution.

More than 9,000 kilograms of mercury was dumped in the English-Wabigoon river from the paper mill in Dryden in the 1960s and 70s. A study released by Japanese experts last fall shows 90 per cent of the people downstream at Grassy Narrows and Wabaseemonng First Nations continue to experience symptoms of mercury poisoning.

"If there isn't additional funding allocated very soon for the engineering design, we won't be able to keep to the premier's timetable," said John Rudd, the head scientist for the Grassy Narrows team studying the river.

Rudd said he was with Grassy Narrows Chief Simon Fobister and environmentalist David Suzuki when Premier Kathleen Wynne committed to a full cleanup and established an aggressive timeline that would see remediation work begin next year.

"I thought they were committed to doing the cleanup, but I guess it's not going to happen," Fobister said after last week's budget failed to account for the full cost of remediation.

For the people of Grassy Narrows that means "more mercury poisoning ? forever," Fobister said.

Rudd said about \$1.5 million is needed for engineers to work with the scientists this summer to design the remediation phase of the project.

The plan for "accelerated natural remediation" of the river system would take about a decade and cost "less than \$100 million" for the overall cleanup, Rudd said.

Grassy Narrows First Nation had asked for the premier to put her promise from the February meeting in writing and put money for the cleanup into a trust to protect it from being chipped away by future governments. That hasn't happened.

Now Rudd said he is concerned and disappointed that he may be reliving an experience he had three decades ago when he was part of a government team that developed a very similar plan for cleaning up the mercury from the Dryden mill.

"After that study our report was put on a shelf and it sat there until we got back to work on this a year or two ago," he said. "I'm just hoping this isn't deja vu all over again."

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change said discussions with both Grassy Narrows and Wabaseemoong are continuing.

"We are committed to working with the communities and other partners to identify potentially contaminated sites and create and implement a comprehensive remediation action plan for the English-Wabigoon River," a spokesperson for the ministry said.

CTV NEWS: TORY SAYS HE WILL CONTINUE TO PRESSURE ONTARIO GOVERNMENT

By: Chris Fox, CTV News Toronto

Published Tuesday, May 2, 2017 5:18PM EDT

<http://toronto.ctvnews.ca/tory-says-he-will-continue-to-pressure-ontario-government-1.3394994>

Mayor John Tory says he will continue to publicly pressure the province for money for transit and housing, even as Premier Kathleen Wynne accuses him of making statements that are “simply not true.”

Wynne told reporters on Tuesday morning that some of the recent comments made by Tory have been misleading and have had a “strong political overtone” to them that she said is “counterproductive.”

In particular, Wynne took issue with Tory’s suggestion that the province has failed to properly fund future transit projects in the city, including the long-discussed downtown relief line. Last year, Queen’s Park provided the city with \$150-million in funding to further study that line and get the project closer to shovel-ready.

“It is just not true that we haven’t stepped up on transit and likewise it is not true that we haven’t stepped up on housing,” she said at a press conference at Lakeridge Health Centre in Oshawa. “I think the whole debate is not appropriate.”

Wynne told reporters that there “is no government that has invested more “in Toronto than her government and accused Tory of ignoring “billions of dollars” in provincial money.

Tory, however, told reporters at a subsequent news conference that he is simply “doing his job” by “standing up for Toronto” and calling on other governments to help fund needed infrastructure, in particular a \$2.6 billion plan to repair crumbling Toronto Community Housing units.

“I have no interest of being of influence or being a power figure or anything else in the Ontario election,” Tory told reporters on Tuesday at city hall. “I just want to make sure that the people I am responsible for as their mayor, including in particular some of the most disadvantaged people who are in Toronto Community Housing, get the help they need from all of their governments to repair housing that any Torontonians would be embarrassed to say is the best we can provide. It is not the best we can do. We have to do better and I need the province to help in achieving that task.”

Some TCHC units may be closed

By the end of 2017, the city will have spent \$870 million on repairing TCHC units, which represents a third of the cost of its 10-year capital plan.

Tory had hoped that the province would include some funding for TCHC capital repairs in the budget released last week but there was no new money for social housing and only \$130 million in previously announced funds for energy retrofits.

Now, there exists a very real possibility that the TCHC will have to close hundreds of units in 2018 and thousands in the following years, should funding not be provided.

Speaking with reporters at city hall, Tory cast away suggestions that his lobbying has veered into partisan territory and vowed to continue putting forward his view “anyway” he can.

Tory also specifically defended his decision over the weekend to hand out flyers at an Etobicoke public housing complex urging residents to contact their Liberal MPP to demand money for needed repairs.

Transportation Minister Steven Del Duca had previously said that Tory was “effectively” campaigning against incumbent MPP in taking that action.

“I didn’t ever say nor would I want to portray that I was campaigning against anybody,” Tory said. “I was campaigning for the tenants of Toronto Community Housing, for justice for those neighbourhoods and for the notion of Liberal MPP’s speaking up on behalf of TCHC residents and Toronto residents.”

Tory met with PC Leader Patrick Brown on Monday and has promised to also meet with Wynne and NDP Leader Andrew Horwath ahead of the 2018 election.

CTV NEWS: ONTARIO TO TEST GIVING SENIORS RETIREMENT HOME STAYS TO EASE HOSPITAL OVERCROWDING

By: Jessica Smith Cross, The Canadian Press
Published Tuesday, May 2, 2017 3:29PM EDT

<http://www.ctvnews.ca/health/ontario-to-test-giving-seniors-retirement-home-stays-to-ease-hospital-overcrowding-1.3394833>

TORONTO -- Offering recuperating seniors free stays in retirement homes is one of the measures the Ontario government will be testing as it tries to tackle the issue of overcrowded hospitals.

The province announced in its budget last week that it would test a program that gives seniors vouchers for their stays in retirement homes in an effort to free up hospital beds, but it has not specified how long the stays will be or which communities the measure will be tested in.

Health Minister Eric Hoskins said the program aims to help so-called alternative-level-of-care patients, who are well enough to leave a hospital but don't do so because they're not able to live independently and don't yet have a spot in a long-term care home or a home-care arrangement.

Such patients, many who are seniors, are an enormous expense to the health-care system and being stuck in a hospital isn't good for their physical or mental health, Hoskins said.

"There are very few patients in ALC beds that love being there, or want to be there," he said on Monday. "So the way I look at it is, the savings we accrue, we can afford to invest out of hospital, often at a fraction of the price and a better patient experience."

The government has been facing mounting calls to act on overcrowded hospitals, where patients have ended up in hallways, boardrooms and even cafeterias when regular beds fill up.

In the budget, the government announced \$24 million for "innovative" ways of dealing with patients in alternative-level-of-care hospital beds.

Those funds will go towards what the government calls "demonstration projects," one of which will be the voucher program, the health ministry said. The government will test the program, which is expected to be running this year, and use the results to inform future policies.

The voucher would cover the cost of recuperating in a private-pay retirement home until a senior is ready to move back home or into government-funded long-term care. Hoskins said the stays provided through the vouchers would be transitional.

A similar program has been running in the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant Local Health Integration Network since October 2014, giving seniors temporary stays in retirement homes at a fraction of the cost of keeping them in hospital beds, according to the LHIN.

Alternative-level-of-care patients make up about 15 per cent of patients in Ontario hospitals, according to the government. And in over-capacity hospitals, they take up beds that are needed by patients with acute medical problems.

Ontario Retirement Communities Association CEO Laurie Johnston said her organization, which represents most of the province's retirement homes, has been in talks with the government about using the voucher program.

She said retirement homes have long worked with the province's home and community care organizations in getting government-funded respite and support services to their residents.

"This is really just an extension of the program to a segment of the population who perhaps would have had difficulty affording private-pay retirement living while they recuperate," Johnston said. "This would make an opportunity for them to recuperate and build their strength as they move on to their next step."

Linda Haslam-Stroud, president of the Ontario Nurses' Association, said she's also spoken with senior civil servants about the use of the voucher program and she's hopeful they'll be successful in moving alternative-level-of-care patients out of hospital more quickly, freeing up beds for other patients.

It's needed, she said, as all year round nurses have to care for patients who are left in hallways as they wait for a bed in a hospital room.

The 2017 budget includes an increase of \$518 million in hospital funding, a three-per-cent boost, which came after five years of funding restraint and warnings from hospitals that their funding hasn't allowed them to keep up with the increasing demand for care.

The budget also 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 in Toronto.

METRO NEWS: METRO EXPLAINS: WHAT CHANGES TO OSAP MEAN FOR STUDENTS

The Ontario government proposed several reforms to the student-loan program in last week's budget.

By: Alex Abdelwahab
Published on Tue May 02 2017

<http://www.metronews.ca/news/ottawa/2017/05/02/metro-explains-what-changes-to-osap-mean-for-students.html>

Last week's budget announced several new changes to the way the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) works, and re-announced several changes we already knew about.

Among them, recent graduates can now wait until they make \$35,000 a year before starting to pay back the provincial portion of their OSAP loan, up from \$25,000. Students graduating this year can take advantage of the change.

The province also announced it would change how it calculates a student's income when determining OSAP eligibility: contributions towards a Registered Retirement Savings Program (RESP) and federal income received by indigenous students under the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) are no longer counted towards income.

Also changed, mature students — those out of high school for more than four years, whether single, married/common-law or a sole support parent — can now get the same OSAP benefits as younger students.

Gayle McFadden, a representative from the Canadian Federation of Students Ontario applauded the changes, but said they didn't go far enough. "There was no real address of the cost of education, of the fact that students pay the highest tuition fees in the entire country," she said.

Many of the other changes were previously announced, but will take effect in September.

Among them, the government is merging several tax credits and five OSAP grants into a single program called the Ontario Student Grant. It promises to provide enough grants to students from families making less than \$50,000 to completely cover the cost of their tuition.

The government has said several times that these changes will allow more than 210,000 students in the province to get free tuition. But questions about how this number was calculated were not answered Monday.

Students will now also receive all of their OSAP money when they ask for it, meaning they can pay off costs such as tuition at the beginning of the year, according to Tanya Blazina, spokesperson for the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development.

The maximum amount of aid that an eligible student can receive each week is also going up to \$180 per week in 2017-2018 for a single student (up from \$160 in 2016/17) and \$450 per week for students who are married or have children (up from \$355 in 2016-17).

OTTAWA CITIZEN: ONTARIO TO TEST GIVING SENIORS RETIREMENT HOME STAYS TO EASE HOSPITAL OVERCROWDING

ottawacitizen.com

Tue May 2 2017

Section: News

Byline: pdtechintegration

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The province announced in its budget last week that it would test a program that gives seniors vouchers for their stays in retirement homes in an effort to free up hospital beds, but it has not specified how long the stays would be or which communities the measure will be tested in.

Health Minister Eric Hoskins said the program aims to help so-called alternative-level-of-care patients, who are well enough to leave a hospital but don't do so because they're not able to live independently and don't yet have a spot in a long-term care home or a homecare arrangement.

Such patients, many who are seniors, are an enormous expense to the health-care system and being stuck in a hospital isn't good for their physical or mental health, Hoskins said.

"There are very few patients in ALC beds that love being there, or want to be there," he said on Monday. "So the way I look at it is, the savings we accrue, we can afford to invest out of hospital, often at a fraction of the price and a better patient experience."

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Alternative-level-of-care patients make up about 15 per cent of patients in Ontario hospitals, according to the government. And in over-capacity hospitals, they take up beds that are needed by patients with acute medical problems.

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She said retirement homes have long worked with the province's home and community care organizations in getting government-funded respite and support services to their residents.

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OTTAWA CITIZEN: *ONTARIO'S CHILD CARE IS A MESS - AND IT'S GOING TO COST YOU*
ottawacitizen.com

Tue May 2 2017

Section: Columnists

Byline: Tyler Dawson, Ottawa Citizen

Great news, parents! The Ontario government is "investing" more than \$200 million this year to make child care more accessible and more affordable.

That's the message politicians want you to hear, but how good a job is government doing on child care, really? Does its approach deliver child care in a way that is fair, rational and affordable?

If one believes that government-licensed child care is the best way to look after young children, then Ontario is falling down badly when it comes to fairness and accessibility. Surely such a vital program should be available to all parents, but Ontario meets only 20 per cent of the province's child-care needs. The Liberals aim to double that over five years. At the current rate of expansion, the program will be universal by the time today's child-care recipients have children of their own.

Tax dollars from middle-class parents support a program to which their children have no access. One could argue that non-parents should support child-care programs for the greater good, but for parents it's like paying education taxes only to have your child turned away at the school gate.

Ontario takes a high cost approach that limits both supply and access.

Government-licensed child care features specially-trained workers and low staff-to-child ratios. The care is offered in specialized buildings whose capital costs are covered, at least in part, by government.

It won't come as a surprise that this is really expensive. Toronto has the highest child-care costs in the country for licensed care at just under \$20,000 a year. In Ottawa, annual fees average about \$15,000.

At those prices, the only customers are low-income families who get subsidies and the well-to-do who can afford the high costs. There aren't enough of either group to fill the spaces that exist today, much less the 24,000 new ones the government will add this year.

In Ottawa, there are about 2,600 vacant spaces in licensed child-care centres, a 10-per-cent vacancy rate. The city cites high cost and lack of subsidy dollars as key reasons for the vacancies. While daycare spaces sit empty in Ottawa, 1,100 children are waiting for a subsidy. In Toronto, there are 4,000 vacant spaces and 15,400 children waiting for subsidies, which pay up to 90 per cent of the cost.

With an approach that produces the highest child-care costs in the country and cuts out the middle class, Ontario is falling well short on affordability and fairness. It's not doing so great on rationality, either.

After years of nurturing the licensed child-care sector, government destabilized it in 2010 when it started to make junior kindergarten full time. As the government is still telling us, that change

could save parents up to \$6,500 a year in child-care costs, but it disrupted the economics of child-care centres by taking away the kids who were the least costly to look after.

The schools didn't have space for all the students government was taking away from child care, so the province had to spend \$1.45 billion on school expansions. Now, the government says it will spend up to \$3 billion building more child-care spaces over the next five years.

None of this delivers a fair and affordable plan that will be broadly available to all Ontario parents. Surely that ought to be the goal, if government is to be involved at all.

Quebec has had low-fee daycare universally available for 20 years. Despite some issues with quality, the program is affordable, accessible and treats parents fairly. To achieve this, Quebec budgets \$2.5 billion a year, more than double what Ontario spends.

By contrast, the Ontario government serves only the rich and the poor, and at the highest possible cost, while congratulating itself for the grand job it is doing.

Randall Denley is an Ottawa commentator, novelist and former Ontario PC candidate.

WINDSOR STAR: LOCAL ALZHEIMER'S GROUP WELCOMES 'WONDERFUL NEWS' FROM PROVINCE

Windsor Star

Wed May 3 2017

Section: Local News

Byline: Mary Caton

Families who use the services of the Alzheimer Society of Windsor & Essex County are still waiting to hear how the provincial government's \$100-million dementia strategy will help them.

"There's not a lot of details yet," said Sally Bennett Olczak, the society's CEO of the Windsor/Essex chapter. "We're awaiting further details and my understanding is it may be coming. Hopefully sooner rather than later."

In broad strokes, the Ontario government committed \$100 million over three years in its April budget for day programs, respite resources and education and training. A few days prior to the budget announcement, the government also earmarked \$20 million for respite care.

"It's wonderful news for the people we care for," Olczak said.

According to community statistics there are 7,200 people in Windsor and Essex County with dementia. The local Alzheimer Society works with 800 people with dementia and approximately 2,000 more who are considered partners in care.

With the number of people suffering from dementia increasing annually at a rate of five per cent, Olczak said "all of our programs run at or beyond capacity."

The local society offers education and support programs, including a day program and in-home respite care.

Demands for services are stretched to the point where "we're down to the wire" in terms of budget, Olczak said. "We're monitoring our expenditures daily, we have to."

Once the details of the provincial strategy are fleshed out, "We fully expect our programs to be expanding," she said.

The province did extensive public consultation as part of the process of developing a dementia strategy. Officials were eager to hear the public's thoughts on proper support, access to information, coordinating services, care giver support, a well trained workforce to provide care and raising awareness about brain health and dementia.

Windsor was one of five sites selected across the province to hold a town hall which resulted in a packed house of 140 or so at the society's Richmond Street offices.

"It shows the community is behind us, and it shows the need," Olczak said.

Ontario was the first province to formalize a dementia strategy in 1999 but the initiative lapsed in 2004. Other provinces have since developed their own plans. Canada remains the only G7 nation without a national dementia strategy.

By 2020, some 250,000 people in Ontario are expected to have dementia, up from the current 230,000.

A spokesman for the ministry of health and long term care would say only that further announcements on the dementia strategy will be made "in the near future."

HAMILTON SPECTATOR: ONTARIO TO TEST GIVING SENIORS RETIREMENT HOME STAYS TO EASE HOSPITAL OVERCROWDING

thespec.com

Tue May 2 2017

Section: News

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HAMILTON SPECTATOR: MAYORS NOT GIVING UP ON WELLAND HOSPITAL

By: Steve Henschel

<http://www.thespec.com/news-story/7273676-mayors-not-giving-up-on-welland-hospital/>

WELLAND — Even as a new Niagara Falls hospital is one step closer to becoming a reality three south-Niagara mayors aren't backing down in their assertion that such a facility should not come at the expense of another.

Since 2012 Niagara Health has been operating under a plan to build a new hospital in Niagara Falls at the intersection of Biggar and Montrose roads, with the new facility replacing both the Greater Niagara General Hospital in Niagara Falls and the Welland Hospital. Initial planning has already been undertaken through a 2014 provincial planning grant to the tune of \$26 million. It now seems the province is prepared to move another step forward with the release of the Ontario budget last week that includes \$7 billion in new health-care funding over the next three years. While no specific amount is attached a new south Niagara hospital is included under the heading of "hospital projects."

While the announcement has largely been treated as positive news three Niagara mayors — Welland's Frank Campion, Port Colborne's John Maloney and Wainfleet's April Jeffs — are vowing to continue their fight to protect the Welland Hospital. All three were quick to note they support a new Niagara Falls hospital.

"We're certainly pleased the province has opened the doors for funding," said Maloney, adding, "that doesn't take away the necessity of a facility in Welland."

The three mayors have been working together since 2014 to push for continued operation of the Welland Hospital, even if a new hospital is built in Niagara Falls, lobbying the Ministry of Health.

"Our position has always been yes, Niagara Falls does need a hospital, and so does Welland," said Campion, noting he has yet to hear anything new from the province after being told last year that no final decision has been made on the Welland site.

"On this end it (the funding) doesn't change much," said Jeffs, adding, "they can go ahead and build ... we will keep advocating."

Jeffs said the argument for a Welland Hospital remains one of equity of access. Some of her constituents would face a nearly 45-minute drive to a new hospital in Niagara Falls should Welland be shuttered.

"It's just a matter of proximity," said Maloney, adding, "that (Welland) is our hospital."

"A hospital in Niagara Falls does not equate to a south Niagara hospital," said Campion.

He went on to explain the demographics speak for themselves. Around 52,000 people call Welland home, and more than 140,000 fall in the catchment area of the Welland Hospital.

"It's all about health care for the residents of Welland and the rest of south Niagara," he said, adding, "140,000 people are counting on that hospital."

He pointed out shuttering the Welland site could also have an impact on the city's ongoing efforts to rebuild itself after repeated economic downturns. A working hospital, he said, has been a part of the draw for new businesses and residents that have come into Welland in recent years.

"For us to prosper we really need a hospital," said Campion.

TIMMINS TODAY: ONTARIO'S COLLEGES SAY BUDGET COMMITMENTS WILL PRODUCE A MORE HIGHLY SKILLED WORKFORCE

Measures announced include increasing funding to support college sustainability by an extra \$10 million this year

By: TimminsToday Staff

<https://www.timminstoday.com/local-news/ontarios-colleges-say-budget-commitments-will-produce-a-more-highly-skilled-workforce-603639>

NEWS RELEASE

NORTHERN COLLEGE

Measures announced in the 2017 Ontario Budget will allow more students to acquire the professional and technical qualifications to pursue rewarding careers, Ontario's colleges said today.

"The budget reinforces the government's commitment to helping more students get the expertise and experience to pursue rewarding careers," said Fred Gibbons, president of Northern College. "It reaffirms the pivotal role that colleges play in student success."

Measures announced in the 2017 Ontario Budget include:

- Exploring new opportunities to improve access to apprenticeship programs.
- Increasing the funding to support college sustainability by an extra \$10 million this year. The increase will be \$16.5 million by 2018-19.
- Developing a new website to provide better information about careers and the labour market to students, parents and employers.
- Enhancing student assistance so that recent graduates won't have to pay the provincial portion of their OSAP loans until they're earning at least \$35,000 a year.
- Reaffirming the investment of \$190 million over three years in the Career Kick-Start Strategy to help more students and graduates get work-related experiences as part of their education.
- Recalibrating the Second Career retraining program for laid-off workers.

"Producing a more highly skilled workforce is essential as new technology and innovations transform our economy," Gibbons said. "This budget will help enhance the programs and

services that Northern College provides and thereby contribute to economic growth and strengthening our communities.”

REMI NETWORK: TORONTO COMMUNITY HOUSING IN CRISIS

From funding gaps to leadership questions: the root causes of TCHC's turmoil

By: Erin Ruddy
Tuesday, May 2, 2017

<https://www.reminetwork.com/articles/toronto-community-housing-in-crisis/>

It has been another tumultuous month for Toronto Community Housing, Canada's largest social housing provider. The city-run entity with a \$9-billion portfolio is once again facing criticism for failing in the upkeep of its 59,000 units—despite a lack of funds, decaying stock, and a wait-list of more than 181,000 people.

Since its inception in 2002, TCHC has faced numerous challenges and scandals, prompting the resignation of four top-level executives amid reports of financial and tenant mismanagement. In the latest wave of turmoil, TCHC announced plans to close 400 homes next year due to a shortage of repair money.

With 600 units already facing closure this year, that will bring the total number of unusable dwellings to 1,000 by the end of 2018. Of course, at a time when affordable housing is at a complete deficit, Toronto citizens greeted this news with a great deal of trepidation.

Last week, Toronto Community Housing also revealed that interim CEO Greg Spearn would be stepping down from his leadership role “for personal reasons.” Spearn, who'd been at the helm since the former CEO Gene Jones resigned in April 2014 following a disparaging ombudsman's report, has yet to comment on his resignation, but new reports suggest the move wasn't voluntary.

“Greg has provided stability and growth at a time of immense challenges,” said chair Bud Purves in a statement. “We appreciate his commitment and our entire Board and staff leadership team wish him well on the next phase of his professional career.”

Taking over as interim CEO is Kevin Marshman, who is currently vice-chair of the board. Marshman will be taking a leave of absence from his current role while he fulfills his new duties and the search for a permanent CEO continues.

But with that search, questions swirl around what—if anything—can be done to get things back on track. Greg Suttor, senior researcher at Toronto's Wellesley Institute is skeptical things can ever improve unless resources are significantly boosted and management issues properly addressed.

“Toronto Community Housing needs more resources,” he says, noting that its operating budget is just over \$800 per unit monthly while rent revenue averages just under \$450 per unit per month. “On a per-unit monthly basis, this operating budget includes just under \$200 in debt service, \$250 for property management, and \$250 for utilities and property tax. As a big public housing provider it also has large IT, security, and head office costs. But its per-unit operating costs are not padded or excessive by industry standards.”

As Suttor also notes, revenues are low because that is TCHC's mandate—to provide low rents to low-income tenants—while the specific rent-to-income calculations are prescribed in

provincial law. But while the costs continue to inch up every year with inflation, the incomes of low-income tenants generally do not. “They’ve been flat for the past couple of decades,” he says.

In the meantime, TCHC is also spending \$250 million per year (around \$4,000 per unit) on major repairs. But this level reflects special federal funding in 2016-2018 that won’t be sustained. Ongoing capital funding is needed to ensure that 50-year-old buildings stay in decent condition. “If any landlord was operating on this basis, they’d be in just as much trouble,” Suttor remarks.

Yet, instead of increasing subsidy, the City has been imposing restraint, while the province is contributing nothing apart from one-time federal flow-through funds for repair, and collaboration on refinancing mortgages to free up some TCHC debt service funds to support those repairs. “Ontario is the only province in Canada and the only jurisdiction among the world’s affluent countries, where most social housing rent subsidy is left to the municipal level of government,” he says.

On the management side, Suttor believes that the turbulence of 2011 through 2014 wasn’t so much about the organization itself, but about the destructive political environment generated by former mayor Rob Ford. “By 2014 everyone recognized the dysfunction and disorder that [Ford’s] politics created, but did they remember that the turmoil at TCHC was Rob Ford’s first mud storm?”

To deal with the ugly fallout of that mud storm, Mayor John Tory appointed an independent six-person Housing Task Force in January, 2015. The Task Force, led by Senator Art Eggleton, conducted a one-year study to provide detailed insight and advice on how to get the beleaguered agency back in working order. Overall concerns included: a lack of respect and responsiveness towards tenants; secrecy and a lack of transparency; an inability to aggressively evict drug-dealers; a deficit of \$107 million on a Regent Park revitalization that was not even half complete; rent arrears that ballooned to \$12.8-million by the end of 2016; an inability to turn around vacant units in a timely manner, resulting in 3,540 vacancies; as well as an increasing repair backlog.

As for management issues today, Suttor says he believes Spearn provided strong leadership during his tenure, but that he’s not surprised the City is looking for a change. “I don’t know the specific reasons why Spearn is departing, but with the City initiating major changes to implement some of the Eggleton TCHC Task Force recommendations, it’s not surprising that there’s a desire for new leadership.”

**INSIDE HALTON: ONTARIO BUDGET WILL HELP RESIDENTS WITH ROUTINE EXPENSES:
HALTON MPP**

By: Melanie Hennessey
May 02, 2017 02:30

<https://www.insidehalton.com/news-story/7273275-ontario-budget-will-help-residents-with-routine-expenses-halton-mpp/>

The Province's 2017 budget is one that will assist local residents with everyday costs, says Halton MPP Indira Naidoo-Harris.

The Liberal politician lauded her government's \$141-billion fiscal plan that was released last week – the first balanced budget it has put forward since the global recession hit in 2008.

With monies earmarked to help people with things like steep hydro costs, and a new "OHIP-plus" plan to provide free prescription drugs to everyone 24 and under, Naidoo-Harris said the budget will make life more affordable for her constituents and everyone across the province.

"This is really a budget that allows us to do all kinds of things for regular folks," she told the Champion. "It's designed for a stronger, healthier Ontario."

She cited several other examples of how the 2017 budget is "putting people first," such as the Province's plans to dish out \$200 million to create 24,000 more licensed childcare spaces for children up to age four, with 16,000 of those spots being subsidized.

"I'm really proud of what we're doing when it comes to childcare," said Naidoo-Harris, who's also the minister responsible for early years and childcare. "After all, our children are our future."

Meanwhile, youths will benefit from the Province's improved Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP). While students previously had to start repaying their loans once they began earning \$25,000, Naidoo-Harris said this amount is being upped to \$35,000.

"This gives our young people a little more time to get that grounding and balance they need in their lives to pay back that loan," she said.

In addition to this, the local politician explained that more than 210,000 Ontario students will be able to access free tuition in the fall through the new OSAP program.

A Career Kickstart Strategy will also provide \$190 million over three years to create 40,000 new work-related opportunities for students and graduates, such as paid internships, to give them experience in their chosen fields.

"I think this is so important for our young people," noted Naidoo-Harris.

The MPP couldn't hide her excitement about the OHIP-plus plan – an initiative that she deemed "groundbreaking, historic and visionary."

"It's such an important, forward-looking initiative and I'm just thrilled that our government is doing this," she said.

Under the new plan, all Ontario residents age 24 and under will be covered for more than 4,400 types of medication, regardless of family income, explained Naidoo-Harris.

“No parent should have to think about whether or not they have enough funds to buy the medicine they need to keep their children healthy,” she said.

When asked if this would be a stepping stone to universal prescription drug coverage for all ages, Naidoo-Harris said the Province is continuing to have discussions with the federal government on the topic.

“Ontario has been leading the discussion about universal coverage for some time and will continue to be a strong voice,” she said.

Other highlights of the 2017 budget include: the 25 per cent reduction in electricity rates, 15 per cent seniors’ public transit tax credit, \$1.3 billion being spent to reduce health-care wait times and increase access to specialized care, \$16 billion being dished out over the next decade for new school construction and renovations, and the 15 per cent speculation tax for foreign property buyers to cool down southern Ontario’s housing market.

“I think Ontarians can be proud of how our government really leads the way in so many different areas,” said Naidoo-Harris.

But the local Liberal politician’s enthusiasm isn’t shared by everyone, including the leaders of the opposition parties who have levelled some harsh criticisms of the 2017 budget in recent days.

Progressive Conservative leader Patrick Brown argued the budget isn’t balanced, claiming there’s a \$5-billion operational deficit due to one-time cash infusions from sources such as government land sales.

“It’s a scam. The numbers do not add up. The Liberals have no plans to get debt under control,” he said.

Meanwhile, the NDP’s Andrea Horwath took the premier to task for failing to introduce universal pharmacare.

“This budget doesn’t even come close to undoing the damage Kathleen Wynne and her Liberals have done over the last 14 years,” she said.

-with files from Torstar News Service

EXCHANGE MAGAZINE: ACHIEVING CONTINUED BALANCED BUDGETS ONLY POSSIBLE IF BUSINESSES GROW

Posted Tuesday May 2 2017

<http://www.exchangemagazine.com/2017/week18/Tuesday/17050211.htm>

Guelph - In response to Budget 2017, the Guelph Chamber of Commerce while commending the government for Ontario's first balanced budget since the global recession, expressed concern that there is no clear long-term plan in areas where businesses see increasing cost such as energy and cap and trade. The only means for the government of Ontario to see continued balanced budgets is if there is a strong and robust private sector.

"While the previously announced measures to reduce energy rates through the Fair Hydro Plan was welcomed, there is still much more to be done and energy remains a significant cost of doing business in Ontario. In addition, providing further clarity around the proceeds from the new cap and trade system is pivotal. Government needs to work collaboratively with the business community to shape how the funds in the Greenhouse Gas Reductions Account are allocated. Businesses in Guelph are at the leading edge of clean technology manufacturing, research, design, and development. As such, engaging with these businesses as this policy is fully formulated will be vitally important," says Kithio Mwanzia, President & CEO of the Guelph Chamber of Commerce.

Ontario's revenues rely on the level and pace of economic activity of the province, but Budget 2017 offers limited vision for how to ensure that private-sector economic growth will continue to rise. Promised Corporate Income Tax rate relief, which the government paused following the economic downturn, were not reinstated. In the 2009 budget, the province pledged to reduce the Corporate Income Tax (CIT) rate to 10% by 2013. Within 10 years it was estimated that the value of this CIT reduction would see Ontario benefit by increased capital investment of \$47 billion, increased annual incomes of \$29.4 billion and an estimated 591,000 net new jobs. However, the CIT reduction promise was halted in 2012 in light of the province's deteriorating fiscal situation, and so the CIT rate remained at 11.5%.

Budget 2017 indicated that 98% of all new jobs since the recession in Ontario have been full time, and 78% in above-average wage industries. This positive economic activity by Ontario's private sector demonstrates a clear commitment to good, quality jobs throughout our province. In addition, Budget 2017 made import investments in post-secondary education and training support as a means of addressing workforce shortages, a major concern for Guelph businesses. Similarly, the continued investment in export development and going global is welcomed.

"The Chamber has been actively involved in programs and activities that better connect Guelph businesses with global opportunities. Through the Global Leadership Forum, the Chamber will continue to focus on connecting businesses in a variety of sectors – including agri-food, manufacturing, infrastructure, and energy – to expanding market opportunities around the world. How the Ontario government supports small-and-medium sized enterprises (SMEs) will impact Guelph's economic future. Guelph and Ontario's ability to succeed is tied to the ability to help SMEs become export ready and scalable," concludes Mwanzia.

KEY POINTS FOR ONTARIO'S BUSINESS COMMUNITY:

- Ontario will not return to planned Corporate Income Tax cuts, jeopardizing tens of billions of dollars in potential capital investment and hundreds of thousands of new jobs.
- 98% of all new jobs since the recession in Ontario have been full time, and 78% in above-average wage industries. This positive economic activity by Ontario's private sector demonstrates a clear commitment to good jobs throughout our province and challenges many recent comments about precarious work and the need for the Changing Workplaces Review.
- Private sector investment is predicted to grow by 3.1%, annually, to 2020, an amount that would outpace growth in real GDP growth and household spending.

EXCHANGE MAGAZINE: TORONTO-WATERLOO CORRIDOR A CONTINUED FOCUS OF ONTARIO 2017 BUDGET

Posted Tuesday May 2 2017

<http://www.exchangemagazine.com/2017/week18/Tuesday/17050227.htm>

Kitchener – The 2017 Ontario budget is helping ensure that the Toronto-Waterloo Corridor continues to move forward. “Kitchener and Waterloo region as a whole are seeing the province’s continued commitment to Two-Way All-Day GO service between Kitchener and Toronto, as well as the possibility of High Speed Rail, a continued priority for our provincial government,” said Kitchener Mayor Berry Vrbanovic.

Mayor Vrbanovic has been a champion of improved transit links between Waterloo region and Toronto. Greater links will not only move people, but will also serve as an economic driver for our region and our province. “People think of rail transit as going from Kitchener to Toronto in the morning and coming back in the evening. But there is tremendous traffic coming from Toronto to our area in the morning, overwhelmingly in the form of people in single occupancy vehicles. This continued commitment in the rail corridor will, in time, alleviate congestion in both directions and drive economic growth for Ontario and the country,” said Mayor Vrbanovic.

Progress is also continuing in other transportation initiatives like the Shirley Avenue expansion to facilitate future construction of a new Highway 7, as well as Highway 401 expansion, which will include High Occupancy Vehicle lanes and the Grand River bridge replacement.

Housing affordability was prominent in today’s budget as well. From funding for new supportive housing to additional policy tools to tackle rapid housing price increases, the provincial budget will help municipalities in their work in this important area.

Affordability has become increasingly important to many people in this region as they have seen the spillover effect of the hot Toronto housing market in higher housing prices in Waterloo region. “The provincial budget provides some tools at the municipal level to assist with stabilizing the housing market. We will review and analyze these tools and see how best they can positively impact Kitchener residents and the housing market in general,” said Vrbanovic. In addition, the provincial government will be looking at selling appropriate surplus provincial land assets, thereby putting more land on the market, to assist with making more affordable housing available.

The Provincial budget also continues to invest in new technologies, from quantum technologies to artificial intelligence and from advanced computing to autonomous vehicles. All these investments play to our area’s strengths, and to strengthening the Toronto-Waterloo Region Corridor.

“These investments can take time to realize their full potential. With an eye on economic growth over the long term, this budget continues to make progress on these and other areas,” said Vrbanovic.

SUDBURY.COM: ONTARIO BUDGET: \$1B RING OF FIRE PROMISE IS STILL NOTHING BUT A PROMISE

But Sudbury MPP Glenn Thibeault says just because the words 'Ring of Fire' aren't in the budget, doesn't mean Ontario has lost interest

By: Northern Ontario Business Staff

<https://www.sudbury.com/local-news/ontario-budget-1b-ring-of-fire-promise-is-still-nothing-but-a-promise-603628>

A billion-dollar promise by the provincial government to fund an all-season transportation corridor to reach the Ring of Fire remains just that.

A month after Ottawa made no mention and released no funding for the Far North mineral belt in the federal budget, Queen's Park decided to followed suit.

It's been ten years since Noront Resources discovered its high-grade Eagle's Nest copper-nickel deposit in the James Bay region, but Sudbury MPP and provincial energy minister Glenn Thibeault said the government is still committed to the cause.

"Absolutely nothing has changed," Thibeault told Sudbury.com.

"I know the Opposition members from Northern Ontario are all running around with their hair on fire saying there's nothing in there for the Ring of Fire.

"We have not changed. We are solely committed to making sure that we can get the Ring of Fire up and running."

Since April 2014, Ontario has been challenging Ottawa to match its \$1-billion commitment to help blaze a corridor through the Canadian Shield to reach the remote and undeveloped deposits in the James Bay lowlands, and help boost the North's stagnate economy.

"Even though it's not explicitly mentioned in the budget, it's still there," said Thibeault.

"We've got a lot invested in this. We want to make sure that this happens. But we do have to do our duty to consult with our First Nations.

"We also need to do our due diligence to make sure we get this right. We all want to see this happen as quickly as possible, we are continuing to see strides made in terms of negotiations, in terms of making sure that the investments are there from the private sector."

Before Northern Development Minister and Mines Michael Gravelle went on personal leave, Thibeault said progress was being made in moving the yardsticks.

"In terms of our commitment to the Ring of Fire, it hasn't changed."

In a news release, Nipissing MPP and finance critic Vic Fedeli declared the Ring of Fire "gone."

“It came as a serious shock to see that this year’s budget removed all mention of the Ring of Fire. After three years of promises the Wynne government has completely abandoned this critical mining project.”

He further pointed out that the budget takes \$70 million away from the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines.

“The ministry helps to establish mining operations all over Northern Ontario, creating good well-paying jobs that help to grow our Northern economy — obviously not a concern of this government.”

Noront Resources, the largest player in the Ring of Fire, plans to start construction on its remote Eagle’s Nest nickel mine site in 2018, followed by work on its Blackbird chromite deposit.

To do that, they’re relying on the Ontario government to make a decision on the route of an access road and to release the infrastructure funding. Approval is also needed from area First Nation communities.

Noront CEO Alan Coutts was unavailable for comment.

Last January at a speech in Sudbury, Coutts hinted if things don’t get moving soon, their financiers and investors are going to lose patience.

“We don’t want to abandon it. But if there’s no money, there’s no money,” said Coutts.

“[Our investors] have been patient, but they’re running out of patience.”

There may be hope that Ring of Fire funding could be released in the spring 2018 pre-election budget. The final report of the government’s multimodal strategy for Northern Ontario will be presented to premier and cabinet in the fall. Since 2011,

Ministry of Transportation has been studying how people and freight move across the region; surveyed business, industry, community and First Nation leaders; and held stakeholders sessions to gather feedback on how to plan and improve transportation infrastructure over the next 25 years.

Once revealed it would provide the government with direction and infrastructure funding recommendations to improve the region’s transportation systems for road, rail, marine, air and other modes.

With files from Darren MacDonald/Sudbury.com

MY WEST NIPISSING NOW: VANTHOF SAYS BUDGET IGNORES THE NORTH

By: Rocco Frangione, Staff
Tuesday, May. 2nd, 2017

<http://www.mywestnipissingnow.com/14867/vanthof-says-budget-ignores-north/>

The fallout continues over last week's provincial budget. Timiskaming-Cochrane New Democrat John Vanthof says Northern Ontario is a big loser in the budget. Vanthof says some ministries involved with the north have seen their budgets cut. However, Vanthof is cutting the Liberals some slack and hopes the cuts are a misunderstanding. Vanthof says he hopes the cuts are the result of a lack of understanding of what drives parts of the province because the budget totally ignores rural and Northern Ontario. Among the ministries that got hit in the budget are northern development and mines, natural resources and forestry, indigenous affairs and lastly, agriculture.

NIAGARA FALLS REVIEW: OFFICIALS WORKING 'AGGRESSIVELY' ON HOSPITAL FILE

By: Ray Spiteri, Niagara Falls Review
Tuesday, May 2, 2017 5:04:00 EDT PM

<http://www.niagarafallsreview.ca/2017/05/02/officials-working-aggressively-on-hospital-file>

With a south Niagara hospital now in the provincial budget, Niagara Health acknowledges there's a "sense of urgency" to complete the project.

"Our teams are working aggressively to deliver on the planning for this project," said Angela Zangari, executive vice-president of finance and operations for Niagara Health.

"Building a hospital is a complicated process that requires a specific level of detailed planning. Every inch of the building needs to be accounted for, right down to where every electrical outlet will go, before construction can start."

She said Niagara Health will continue getting input from patients and families, physicians, staff and volunteers, as it works through the various stages of planning.

"Given the level of planning still required, the (request for proposal) process that follows and construction timelines, we are on track to complete the hospital in 2023."

Niagara was listed on page 81 of the provincial budget announced Thursday as an Ontario community that would benefit from \$9 billion earmarked for the construction of new hospitals during the next decade.

The news was welcomed by those who have been calling for a new hospital for Niagara Falls, including Niagara Health, Niagara Falls Mayor Jim Diodati and Niagara Falls NDP MPP Wayne Gates.

Zangari said Niagara Health continues to work through five stages in the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's capital planning process.

In January 2014, the province announced a \$26.2-million planning grant for a new south Niagara hospital proposed for the corner of Montrose Road and Biggar Road to replace aging facilities in Niagara Falls, Fort Erie, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Welland and Port Colborne.

So far, said Zangari, Niagara Health has made three submissions to the ministry for consideration.

Stage 1A outlines the "high-level" programs and services that would be offered, while Stage 1B outlines the space requirements for the building.

Stage 2, which was submitted last November, takes a more detailed look at programs, services and space requirements, she said.

In January, the Local Health Integration Network endorsed the Stage 1A submission.

"We continue to work with the ministry and are prepared to move ahead with our Stage 3 submission, which produces the preliminary design for the hospital," said Zangari.

“We anticipate detailed planning approvals from the ministry are forthcoming.”

The hospital on the outskirts of Niagara Falls is proposed to be a centre of excellence for stroke, ophthalmology, complex care, geriatric/psychogeriatric, and wellness in aging.

It’s expected to provide emergency and urgent care, as well as surgical services, inpatient services, hemodialysis, ambulatory clinics, mental health and addiction services, and diagnostic imaging.

Ministry spokesman David Jensen did not answer specific questions about how much the hospital will cost, or if it’s possible for the construction completion timeline to be moved up to 2021, from 2023.

Gates has been lobbying the province to move the timeline forward to 2021.

Jensen sent an email statement to the Niagara Falls Review indicating the provincial government has committed an additional \$9 billion to support hospital infrastructure as part of a plan to invest \$20 billion in capital grants to hospitals during the next 10 years.

“A new hospital in south Niagara has been identified as a priority that will address growing demand for health-care services and support new and innovative models of care,” he said.

“We look forward to working with the local hospital, community, municipality and the LHIN to advance planning and work towards a new hospital. The budget makes it clear that the local community has a partner in the Ontario government.”

Diodati said he received a call from Premier Kathleen Wynne Thursday evening about the south Niagara hospital.

Diodati was invited by Wynne to visit the provincial legislature for Finance Minister Charles Sousa’s 2017 budget announcement.

“She was very positive, optimistic and offered congratulations,” he said.

“She was very pleased about being able to move forward on this and begin an approved and funded project, which is huge. She knows we’ve been working on this for years.”

Diodati said it took a “real team effort” to get to this stage, including MPPs, Niagara Health, health-care professionals and city council.

He pointed to the Grassl family, Toronto businesspeople who own property in Niagara Falls, who in 2013 donated 12 hectares of land at the Montrose and Biggar intersection for a hospital to serve south Niagara.

He also credited Fort Erie town council, which pledged \$3 million to the project, and Niagara Falls city council, committed \$22 million.

“We anticipated a positive announcement, we just didn’t know when,” said Diodati.

“I believe there’s going to be a further, formal announcement down here on site.”

He said the province didn't give him an indication of when that on-site visit might take place.

Diodati said it's his understanding the south Niagara hospital project could cost about \$1 billion.

"It's going to be big," he said, adding the province understands the savings that come with consolidating services from various sites into one site.

"Significant savings of more than \$20 million per year."

He said the project will lead to "better health care at a better price, so that we don't have to leave Niagara to get (certain serious medical) attention."

"Right now, let's face it, if it's anything serious, you go to Hamilton, Toronto, London. People don't stay around here and that's the reality, like it or not. Now, with a new north and south hospital, I think we're in a good place."

Diodati is cognizant that some, particularly in communities such as Welland, Port Colborne, Wainfleet and Pelham, have been critical of the location of the south Niagara hospital, and have questioned whether Niagara Falls is really in south Niagara.

He said the hospital location was picked by mapping and medical experts, not by politicians.

"It was picked based on population density, population growth, accessibility. There was a whole series of metrics."

Diodati said Niagara Falls shares a southerly border with Welland and noted that Niagara Health is also planning to build a new facility to replace the existing Welland hospital.

That would include urgent care, dialysis clinics, outpatient clinics for medical and surgical patients, diagnostic imaging, ultrasound and radiology, as well as a lab and other services.

"Obviously Welland is the third biggest municipality in the region (behind St. Catharines and Niagara Falls) and they're very important, and they've always been a priority for (Niagara Health)," said Diodati.

"The idea is to get better health care, and I think they've got great opportunities for upgrading their health care as well."

Gates said he has long highlighted the importance of getting a new hospital built in Niagara Falls.

He said he's concerned with the services that have been taken out of the Niagara Falls site and moved to St. Catharines.

Gates said he continues to have dialogue with Diodati, Niagara Health officials and Eric Hoskins, minister of health and long-term care, about the project.

He said immediately after the budget announcement, he went to Hoskins and said "we need this thing done as quickly as possible."

He said he would also like firm timelines for the project and to know how long before it moves from planning to shovels in the ground.

Gates said Hoskins told him he's going to try to move the timeline up for Niagara Falls.

"I've been very open and frank with him that I want to make sure that it's being done by local workers. This will put some skilled trades (people) back to work and be able to support a lot of local business."

He said he also wants to have a conversation with Hoskins about how the project will be funded.

Gates said he prefers a publicly funded project, as opposed to a public-private partnership.

"I also raised the issue with him that we need 24/7 urgent care in Fort Erie, and my staff was at a meeting last week with Niagara-on-the-Lake to make sure that their health-care needs are met as well."

BENEFITS CANADA: HAVE YOUR SAY: SHOULD OTHER PROVINCES FOLLOW ONTARIO'S PHARMACARE PLAN?

By: Staff | May 2, 2017

<http://www.benefitscanada.com/news/have-your-say-should-other-provinces-follow-ontarios-pharmacare-plan-97186>

As Benefits Canada reported last week, the Ontario government announced in its 2017 budget that it will begin offering universal pharmacare to youth under the age of 25. The program will take effect on January 1, 2018, and will cover the 4,400 medications in the Ontario Drug Benefit Formulary.

"By eliminating financial barriers to prescribed drugs, [the program] will improve access, lead to healthier lives for our children and youth, and is a major step forward towards universal pharmacare," Eric Hoskins, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, said in a release.

Hoskins also noted employers will save costs from reduced administrative fees, CBC News reported.

Other stakeholders have pointed out that while plan sponsors' costs will drop, youth don't often take many expensive medications, so savings will be limited.

But critics say the universality of the program is wasteful, and the government shouldn't pay for drug costs for the children of the one percent.

What do you think? Should other provinces follow Ontario's lead in implementing pharmacare for youth under 25? [Have your say here.](#)

As for last week's poll, it asked whether respondents are considering changing their benefits plans to reduce costs this year. Responses were pretty split: 37.5 per cent said yes, they are considering significant changes to rein in high drug costs. Another 37.5 per cent said no, their costs are manageable and under control. And 25 per cent said their organization has already taken steps to control benefits costs.

WEALTH PROFESSIONAL: ONTARIO'S TITLE-RESTRICTION PLEDGE EARNS PRAISE FROM FPSC

By: Leo Almazora
02 May 2017

<http://www.wealthprofessional.ca/news/ontarios-titlerestriction-pledge-earns-praise-from-fpsc-224898.aspx>

In its recent budget announcement, Ontario said it would act on policy recommendations made by the Ontario Expert Committee. One key point was its renewed commitment to tighten regulations on those who hold themselves up as financial planners — a timely initiative that the Financial Planning Standards Council (FPSC) is supporting.

The Ontario government vowed to work with regulators over the coming year to create standards to ensure that those who use the title “financial planner” are qualified, ethical, overseen, and accountable for their professional conduct. According to the FPSC, Canada (aside from Quebec) has no restrictions or standards to determine who can use the title.

In response to recent news involving Canada’s biggest banks, the Small Investor Protection Association (SIPA) has claimed that deceptive titles are being used to deceive investors into buying unsuitable products.

“FPSC, along with our Financial Planning Coalition partners, has long advocated for title restriction on who may call themselves a ‘Financial Planner,’” said FPSC President and CEO Cary List. Noting that the issues have not been addressed, List added that the organization hopes other provinces will follow.

Ontario is also looking into introducing a best-interest duty for providers of financial planning and advisory services in the province. Such a duty would put clients’ interests above all others’. The FPSC said that such a standard has long been expected from Canada’s nearly 20,000 certified financial planners and FPSC level 1 certificants in financial planning.

“Once implemented, these policy changes will help Ontarians to make more informed choices regarding whom they work with to help guide them to financial well-being,” List said.

The FPSC has said it looks forward to lending its expertise to the government’s policy efforts toward following the expert committee recommendations and furthering the best interests of consumers.

**PETERBOROUGH EXAMINER: ONTARIO NDP LEADER ANDREA HORWATH IN
PETERBOROUGH ON WEDNESDAY**

By: The Peterborough Examiner
Tuesday, May 2, 2017 4:59:48 EDT PM

<http://www.thepeterboroughexaminer.com/2017/05/02/ontario-ndp-leader-andrea-horwath-in-peterborough-on-wednesday>

Ontario New Democratic Party Leader Andrea Horwath will be visiting Peterborough on Wednesday.

She is making a 12:15 p.m. stop at the Balsillie Family YMCA at 123 Aylmer St., according to party spokesman Robin Nieto.

She plans to discuss the NDP's universal Pharmacare platform and local health care with participants of The Lung Association's Fitness for Breath program, for people with chronic lung diseases.

Pharmacare has been making headlines after the Ontario Liberal government announced in last week's budget a plan to provide free prescription medication to all Ontario residents under 25. The program is slated to begin on Jan. 1 and the government estimates it would cost \$465 million in the first year.

**DIGITAL JOURNAL: MORE HOSPITAL CUTS AS PROVINCIAL BUDGET DISAPPOINTS;
MEDIA CONFERENCE WEDNESDAY TO ANNOUNCE JUNE PROVINCIAL RALLY IN
SUDBURY**

<http://www.digitaljournal.com/pr/3328534>

SUDBURY, ONTARIO--(Marketwired - May 2, 2017) - Despite telegraphing a much-needed provincial funding injection into hospitals in last week's budget, "Ontario's Liberals again didn't deliver for hospital patients," says Michael Hurley president of the Ontario Council of Hospital Unions (OCHU/CUPE).

Hurley and Dave Shelefontiuk the president of Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) 1623 will hold a media conference in Sudbury on Wednesday, May 3, 2017 at 10 a.m. at 885 Regent St. 3rd floor – Unit 11A. They will announce a provincial hospital rally in Sudbury in June and review the implications of the Ontario budget funding shortfall for hospitals.

The budget only gave 3 per cent. But real costs are rising 5.3 per cent.

"For hospitals like Health Sciences North that means continued overcrowding and not enough staff to meet the needs of increasingly sicker patients. We are optimistic that the other two Ontario parties appreciate the need to restore funding to hospitals," says Hurley.

Shelefontiuk says front line staff at the hospital are working flatout and dealing with high workloads and demands. "I don't see how keeping a hospital workforce so lean that they are permanently exhausted can be good for patient outcomes," says Shelenfontiuk.

Hospitals and long-term care facilities have endured 8 years of real budget cuts. OCHU and others including the Ontario Hospital Association had called for at least a 5 per cent funding increase for hospitals in 2017.

Based on the latest figures from the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI), Ontario government funding for hospitals is \$1,395.73 per capita. The rest of Canada, excluding Ontario, spends \$1,749.69 per capita. In other words, provincial and territorial governments outside of Ontario spend \$353.96 more per person on hospitals than Ontario does. That is a whopping 25.3 per cent more than Ontario.

The June provincial hospital funding rally planned for Sudbury is one of several planned for 2017. Over 2000 hospital and long-term care workers attended similar rallies held in October 2016 in Kingston and in Hamilton in February.

TV TRANSCRIPTS

CITYTV: *ONTARIO CRITICIZED FOR TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY FUNDING CUTS*

Source: CityTV

May 2, 2017 6:13 PM (6)

Reporter: The provincial government is coming under fire today for its decision to slash funding to the Toronto Public Library budget. It's because of a digitization program that the Liberals say is underperforming.

Eleanor McMahon, Minister of Tourism, Culture & Sport: Decision was made to diminish the funding for a program that was no longer, you know, being properly utilized or not in its intended use. And so our decision was made with considerable care and attention. And our support for libraries remains unequivocal. It's just this aspect of a virtual reference library that is being underutilized.

Reporter: The cuts will cost \$1.4 million over the next two years. The province says it's only reallocating money for the virtual reference library program and that the base funding for Toronto's public libraries will not be touched. At Queen's Park, the opposition parties called the Liberals' decision a disgrace.

Andrea Horwath, Ontario NDP Leader: Libraries are important and the Toronto Public Library provides a lot of great services for communities and for families, and it's a disgrace that they turn around and cut that funding as well.

Vic Fedeli, PC Finance Critic: They've cut a million four out of the budget. Which libraries are they going to be closing? Are people being affected? These are the questions the government doesn't want to answer and they certainly aren't answering questions of Mayor Tory.

Reporter: The cuts come amid an apparent feud between Mayor John Tory and Premier Kathleen Wynne over the province's refusal to institute road tolls in Toronto and provide new money for Toronto community housing repairs. The mayor says he's worried the loss of library funding could hurt some of our city's most vulnerable residents.

John Tory, Mayor of Toronto: In particular, it serves some of the people who are, you know, most marginalized in our city. We've chosen it as a location, the library, for some of our poverty reduction initiatives, and it is a place where a lot of people have their only access to technology, for example. So I hope it's a place that won't suffer.

Reporter: The Toronto Public Library says it's not clear what the funding reduction will mean for its branches yet but that there will be an impact to services.

Ana-Maria Critchley, Manager of Stakeholder Relations at the Toronto Public Library: There's no way that we could absorb that cut without service impacts but what those service impacts will be, it is still too – the information is too new for us to know. We just very recently found out. We have a library board meeting coming up on May 15th and we'll be reporting on it then.

Reporter: Now the mayor says he will be speaking to the provincial government about the library budget just as soon as he is able. For its part, the Wynne government says it actually added \$1 million in funding in its latest budget for library programs across the province.

CKVR: PREMIER WYNNE PROMOTES BUDGET PLANS FOR HEALTH SPENDING

Source: CKVR

May 2, 2017 6:49 PM (18)

Anchor: The Premier is out selling her budget plans for health spending. Today Kathleen Wynne said the province is taking aim at patient wait times, looking to improve it with a boost in funding.

Premier Kathleen Wynne: What that means is that a senior can get a knee replacement surgery sooner. It means that he or she can access more easily local health support during their recovery. It means a family doctor can get faster online access to advice from a specialist.

Anchor: Wynne made the comments this morning in Oshawa. The province will invest 1.3 billion dollars over the next three years, reducing wait times for various treatments and increasing capacity for new procedures such as cardiac services and transplants.