

Today's News - Friday, May 19, 2017

From: Todays News (OPO) <todays.news@ontario.ca>
To: Todays News (OPO) <todays.news@ontario.ca>
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High speed rail cuts down on travel times, gives people more low-carbon transportation options, and creates new opportunities for workers and businesses. Ontario is supporting economic growth in Southwestern Ontario and across the province by moving forward with high speed rail along the Toronto-Windsor corridor, becoming the first province to undertake a rail transformation of this magnitude. Premier Kathleen Wynne, Steven Del Duca, Ontario's Minister of Transportation, and Deb Matthews, MPP for London North Centre, were in London today to announce that the province is moving ahead with preliminary design work on the project and investing \$15 million in a comprehensive environmental assessment. The announcement comes as the province releases a new report by David Collenette, Ontario's Special Advisor on high speed rail. After extensive consultations, his report has concluded that there is a business case for high speed rail along the Toronto-Windsor corridor and that there are opportunities to engage the private sector in financing and delivering the project. High speed rail could cut travel times between Toronto and Windsor from four hours to just over two.

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Also today:

- Ontario is working to make it easier for businesses to grow and create more jobs. Proposed measures to help small businesses grow and cut red tape, to be introduced this fall, include:
 - o Reducing regulatory costs: Requiring all ministries to offset every dollar of new administrative costs to business, by removing \$1.25 of old and unnecessary costs
 - o Streamlining compliance for small business: Ensuring that undue burdens aren't placed on small businesses when new or amended regulations are introduced
 - o International or national standards alignment: Increasing harmonization with other jurisdictions and adopting international or national standards
 - o Rewarding good actors: Recognizing businesses that have a good compliance record and lowering their costs by reducing the requirements
 - o Electronic transmission guarantee: Providing businesses the option to electronically submit any required documentation to the Government of Ontario
 - o Government procurement: Introducing a preferred procurement policy for small businesses that would help provide better access to government contracts
 - o One-window service: Developing a new program that would help small businesses access support, information and resources by phone, online and in person
 - o Reducing fees and other costs: Reviewing licence and registration fees paid with a goal of providing relief to by small- and medium-sized businesses

These proposed changes support Ontario's five-year, \$650-million [Business Growth Initiative](#) that is helping to grow the economy and create jobs by promoting an innovation-based economy, helping small companies scale-up and modernizing regulations for businesses.

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- Ontario is moving forward with changes that will ensure workers' retirement benefits are protected and maintained, while enabling business to grow and be more competitive. Employers will

continue to be required to ensure pension funds are appropriately funded and to pay into a reserve to protect benefits for workers and retirees. Employers will have greater flexibility in managing their pension contributions, allowing them to plan for their pension costs more easily. There will be no impact on the pensions that retirees now receive as a result of these changes. Along with new funding requirements, additional measures will protect benefit security for plan members and retirees. The monthly guarantee provided by the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund will be increased by 50 per cent, from \$1,000 a month to \$1,500 a month.

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Ontario Place will be at the centre of the action this summer as the province celebrates its 150th anniversary, with four free festivals to mark the milestone. People can rediscover Ontario Place with a different themed event every long weekend this summer:

- o Starting today and running until Victoria Day, May 22, the [Culinary Ontario festival](#) will highlight the best of food and drink from across the province
- o During the Canada Day weekend from June 30-July 3, the Heritage Ontario festival will celebrate the heritage, culture and traditions of Ontario
- o Over the Simcoe Day weekend, August 4-7, an Arts & Music festival will explore all forms of artistic expression with a focus on Ontario and newcomer artists
- o On Labour Day weekend from September 1-4, the Active Ontario festival will inspire visitors to experience a variety of outdoor sports and healthy lifestyle activities

In addition to these festivals, there are almost 1,000 Ontario150-funded ways to celebrate our sesquicentennial across the province. Highlights include:

- o From May 20 to September 4, Ottawa's ByWard Market will be transformed into [Inspiration Village](#)
- o [Doors Open Ontario](#) is offering expanded programming in cities and towns across the province to showcase Ontario's architecture and history
- o [Wild Ontario](#) continues at the Butterfly Conservatory at the Niagara Parks Commission, highlighting the province's incredible biodiversity
- o On June 1, [The Roberta Bondar Foundation](#) will launch its travelling exhibition, Light in the Land — The Nature of Canada at Science North, Sudbury
- o [SESQUI](#) launches its Ontario-exclusive community tour at Toronto's Regent Park, June 21 to 25, before travelling around the province, and will offer audiences of all ages a true 360° immersive experience through the 20-minute film HORIZON
- o [Luminato](#) runs June 14 to 25 in Toronto and features an Ontario150-funded opening night tribute to the immeasurable power, passion, beauty and resilience of Indigenous women

For more information about how the province is celebrating this anniversary, visit the [Ontario150 website](#) and try the new interactive map to see what is happening in communities across Ontario.

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As the May long weekend arrives, celebrate the unofficial start of the summer season with an outdoor adventure at an Ontario provincial park. Enjoy paddling along great backcountry canoe routes in Lady Evelyn-Smoothwater, discover an intimate campsite at Neys or sit back and relax in a roofed accommodation at MacGregor Point. Most of Ontario's provincial parks are open now, and offer many exciting activities all year long. With spring weather warming up, try out some of these ideas:

- o Guided overnight camping at one of eight provincial parks with the Learn to Camp at Ontario Parks program
- o Learn how to canoe at Frontenac on June 4, with a workshop teaching canoe safety, paddling techniques and time to practice on the water
- o Bird-watching at the Warblers and Whimbrels Weekend at Presqu'île from May 20-21, or the Annual Spring Loon Count at Killarney on June 10
- o Victorian games, heritage crafts and live music on the Farm at Bronte Creek on May 22

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Our government's plan to build a stronger, healthier Ontario includes historic new **investments in health care, including free medications for everyone 24 and under** through OHIP+: Children and Youth Pharmacare, **providing free tuition** to over 210,000 students and on-the-job learning opportunities to help land a great job, helping 100,000 kids access quality, licensed child care, **making everyday life more affordable by reducing electricity costs** by 25 per cent on average through our proposed Fair Hydro Plan, and **taking action to make housing more affordable** for homebuyers and renters through our Fair Housing Plan.