

Today's News - Monday, January 22, 2018

From: Todays News (OPO) <todays.news@ontario.ca>
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Ontario is seeking public input to help shape policies and programs that will be part of the province's 2018 Budget. Charles Sousa, Minister of Finance, and Yvan Baker, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Finance, were joined today by MPPs Cristina Martins and Han Dong in Toronto to kick off the annual pre-budget consultations. Consultations will take place over the coming weeks in Windsor, London, Thornhill, Etobicoke, Niagara region, Hamilton, Ottawa, Kingston, Oshawa, Brampton, Thunder Bay and Kitchener. Ontario will also host pre-budget telephone town halls to reach more people across the province, and ideas can be sent by [mail](#), [email](#) or fax (416-325-0969) by February 9, 2018. In addition, people are invited to vote by January 26, 2018 for up to three ideas suggested by members of the public through Budget Talks, an innovative online consultation. The selected ideas will be announced as part of the 2018 Budget and be eligible for up to \$5 million in funding.

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Also Today:

Ontario is helping to diversify and strengthen the northern economy by growing the agriculture, aquaculture and food processing sector in the region. Michael Gravelle, Minister of Northern Development and Mines, on behalf of Jeff Leal, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, made the announcement at the Northern Ontario Farm Innovation Alliance Research Symposium in Thunder Bay. The [Northern Ontario Agri-Food Strategy](#) encourages businesses and communities to work together with the province to drive the growth and development of its agri-food sector and help increase local food consumption in Northern Ontario. Developed with the input of agri-food businesses and organizations, as well as local and Indigenous communities, the strategy identifies government commitments to help grow the sector, such as supporting research and the growth of the food, beverage and aquaculture industries, as well as expanding livestock farming and soil mapping in the region.

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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 and making it more affordable for families, making everyday life more affordable by reducing electricity costs by 25 per cent on average through our Fair Hydro Plan, and taking action to make housing more affordable for homebuyers and renters through our Fair Housing Plan.