

Today's News - Monday, May 8, 2017

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Today, Minister of Education Mitzie Hunter announced that Ontario's high school graduation rate has reached a historic new high. In 2016, the five-year graduation rate increased to 86.5 per cent – up more than 18 percentage points compared to the 2004 rate of 68 per cent. The number of students graduating in four years continues to grow and is now 79.6 per cent – an increase of more than 23 percentage points since 2004. A number of innovative programs introduced as part of the Student Success Strategy have helped improve the graduation rate. These include Specialist High Skills Majors, dual credits and expanded cooperative education. Instead of using a one-size-fits-all approach, students can customize their high school experience to match their strengths, interests and career goals. The new Career Kick-Start Strategy will also help more students gain work-related experience during their studies, build their resumes and develop job relevant skills. The 2017 Budget includes an additional investment of \$6.4 billion over three years in Ontario's education system. Enabling more students to achieve success in school and beyond is part of Ontario's plan to create jobs, grow our economy and help people in their everyday lives.

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Also today:

- Ontario is making it easier to take public transit and pay the fare by partnering with Shoppers Drug Mart to sell and load PRESTO cards at select stores in Toronto. Transportation Minister Steven Del Duca visited Shoppers Drug Mart today to announce the arrangement with Metrolinx, which operates PRESTO. Beginning today, customers will be able to buy, load, and set child, elementary and high school student and senior discounts on their PRESTO cards at 10 Shoppers Drug Mart locations across the city, with more locations to be added later this year. Making transit more convenient and accessible is part of our plan to create jobs, grow our economy and help people in their everyday lives.

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- Ontario is taking steps to improve representation of all people living in Ontario's northernmost communities. The Far North Electoral Boundaries Commission will review the boundaries of Ontario's two northernmost ridings (Kenora-Rainy River and Timmins-James Bay) to make recommendations about the creation of at least one and as many as two additional ridings in these areas. Members of the commission are:
 - The Honourable Justice Joyce Pelletier, who will chair the commission
 - Greg Essensa, Ontario's chief electoral officer

- Michael Pal, assistant professor specializing in electoral and constitutional law, University of Ottawa
 - Therese Hall, Indigenous community representative
 - Eric Fisher, Indigenous community representative
- The commission will conduct public hearings and submit a final report to the Attorney General by August 1, 2017.

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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.