

Today's News - Tuesday, June 6, 2017

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Ontario is helping children and families access affordable, quality child care with a historic new investment to help create 100,000 more licensed child care spaces across the province. Indira Naidoo-Harris, Minister Responsible for Early Years and Child Care, was joined by Mitzie Hunter, Minister of Education, to make the announcement today at Life-Bridge Child Care in Toronto. Ontario is investing \$1.6 billion to build 45,000 new licensed child care spaces in schools in 2017, and expanding to other public spaces and communities across Ontario over the next five years. The province also released its Renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework and Expansion Plan. The framework will act as a blueprint for expanding childcare in Ontario over the next five years. As part of the framework, the province will launch an expert-led Affordability Strategy which will help identify options to further reduce child care costs, and review the current funding approach. The framework also outlines a seven-point plan for how the province will transform its early years and child care system, which includes increasing access to early years and child care programs, and establishing a workforce strategy to support Ontario's early years and child care professionals. Making licensed child care more affordable and more accessible for families is part of our plan to create jobs, grow our economy and help people in their everyday lives.

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Also today:

- Minister of Labour, Kevin Flynn was in Brampton to discuss the historic action the province is taking to improve the working conditions of temporary help agency workers with a plan for [Fair Workplaces and Better Jobs](#). This includes ensuring workers at temporary help agencies receive equal pay for equal work, hiking the minimum wage, implementing a more appropriate unionization model for their sector, introducing paid personal emergency leave for every worker and stepping up enforcement of employment laws. Over the past three years, Ontario's economy has outperformed all G7 countries in terms of real GDP growth. While exports and business investments are increasing and the unemployment rate is at a 16-year low, the nature of work has changed. Many workers are struggling to support their families on part-time, contract or minimum-wage work. Government has a responsibility to ensure Ontario workers are protected by updating the province's labour and employment laws. To help safeguard employees and create fairer and better workplaces, the Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act, 2017 would:
 - Mandate equal pay for temporary help agency (THA) employees doing the same job as permanent employees of the agencies' client companies, and equal pay for part-time, casual and seasonal employees doing the same job as full-time employees
 - Require a THA to provide temporary help workers with at least one week's notice when an assignment scheduled to last longer than three months will be terminated early, or to provide a week of work or lieu pay if sufficient notice is not given
 - Raise Ontario's general minimum wage to \$14 per hour on January 1, 2018, and then to \$15 on January 1, 2019, followed by annual increases at the rate of inflation
 - Establish card-based union certification for the temporary help agency industryTo enforce these changes, the province will hire up to 175 more employment standards officers and launch a program to educate both employees and small and medium-sized businesses about their rights and obligations under the Employment Standards Act.

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- Ontario is investing in free online textbooks and educational resources for students to make college and university more affordable and accessible. Deb Matthews, Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development and Minister Responsible for Digital Government, made the announcement at eCampusOntario, alongside partners in digital education. Ontario is partnering with eCampusOntario to develop and provide free and low-cost digital textbooks to students. The Ontario Open Textbooks Initiative will focus on Ontario-specific content in areas where the most significant impact and cost savings for students can be realized, including high-enrolment first-year courses, French language content, content for Indigenous studies, trades and technical skills content, and content for new Canadians. New materials developed for Ontario will be added to the [eCampusOntario](#) online library of free educational resources which also launches today. Making education more affordable for students is part of our plan to create jobs, grow our economy, and help people in their everyday lives.

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- Premier Kathleen Wynne departs on a mission to Washington, D.C this afternoon. As part of the Premier's first mission to the U.S. capital, she will meet with senior U.S. officials and economic leaders, and participate in a joint mission of Canada's Premiers. Establishing open dialogue on the things that matter most to both Canada and the U.S., Premier Wynne will focus on protecting Ontario's economic partnerships, creating jobs and more opportunities for growth on both sides of the border. The mission to D.C. will further the Premier's ongoing engagement efforts at the state level, highlighting to U.S. federal representatives Ontario's critical role in making the U.S.-Canada trade relationship one of the most prosperous in the world. Advancing Ontario's interests with the U.S. is part of our plan to create jobs, grow our economy and help people in their everyday lives.

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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.