

Today's News - Tuesday, December 12, 2017

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Premier Kathleen Wynne announced Ontario's highest honour for innovative solutions supporting [the province's powerhouse agri-food industry](#) today at the 11th annual Premier's Awards for Agri-Food Innovation Excellence. Stouffville-based [Greenbelt Microgreens](#) received the top honour of the Premier's Award for developing an eco-friendly process to grow organic microgreens year-round. The company's state-of-the-art facility grows nutrient-dense sunflower sprouts, pea shoots, wheat grass and other microgreens that can be produced on an average 10-day growth cycle, with a shelf life of 13 days. The Minister's Award was presented by Jeff Leal, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, to Mississauga-based [SunPillar Inc./Two Bridges Vineyards](#) for developing [Hive Health](#), a product designed to fit inside a standard commercial beehive that helps producers monitor bee health without having to disturb their bees. Three Leaders in Innovation Awards were also presented to:

- § [Moyers Apple Products](#), based in Beamsville, for developing a chemical-free, waterless sanitizer for produce that reduces health risks and increases shelf life
- § [Freshwater Cuisine](#), based in Kenora, for creating popular food products that minimize food waste by incorporating all parts of freshwater fish
- § [Fresh Air Media](#) (Andrew Campbell), based in Strathroy, for raising awareness of the journey from farm to table through social media and helping to bring rural and urban communities together.

The Premier's Awards are presented at the annual Summit on Agri-Food, which brings together industry leaders from across the province. This year, attendees explored how Ontario is growing its agri-food sector at home and abroad, with discussions on trade and collaboration, as well as what's next in agri-food innovation.

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Also Today:

- *Ontario has passed legislation to enhance transparency, accountability and the quality of care across the health care sector, including greater oversight of long-term care homes and pharmaceutical companies. [The Strengthening Quality and Accountability for Patients Act, 2017](#) will ensure that the province's health system continues to put patients and their families first by making important changes to key pieces of legislation which strengthen oversight and safeguard the quality of care in Ontario. Key highlights include:*
 - o *Making Ontario the first province or territory in Canada to require the medical industry, including pharmaceutical and medical device manufacturers, to disclose payments made to health care professionals and organizations, as well as other recipients.*
 - o *Strengthening Ontario's quality and safety inspection program for long-term care homes with new enforcement tools, including financial penalties and new provincial offences for non-compliance.*
 - o *Enabling paramedics to provide appropriate, safe and effective care for patients by providing timely on-scene care, and/or transportation to another facility that best meets their needs. This will allow patients to receive more appropriate care closer to home and in the community, improve ambulance service coverage and help address overcrowding in emergency departments.*
 - o *Prohibiting the creation of new private hospitals in Ontario and enabling existing private*

hospitals to be designated as community health facilities or other facilities at a later date, so there is greater quality oversight through more detailed reporting and consistency in delivering quality care.

- o Ensuring that no person, other than a regulated health professional, shall sell, offer for sale or provide eye tattooing or implantation of eye jewellery.*
- o Permitting the regulation of recreational water facilities, like splash pads and wading pools, and personal service settings, including barber shops and nail salons, to help ensure Ontario's high public health quality standards are met.*
- o Strengthening the oversight of diagnostic medical sonographers (those who use ultrasound) through new legislation that will cover the entirety of the medical radiation and imaging technology profession.*
- o Requiring operators of community health facilities and medical radiation devices (such as X-ray machines, CT scanners, ultrasound machines and MRIs) to obtain a licence and enhancing the enforcement tools available to inspectors, to improve patient safety.*
- o Strengthening the protection of seniors in Retirement Homes, through increased oversight powers of the Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority (RHRA), while increasing overall transparency, accountability and governance.*

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- Today, Ontario passed legislation that will give communities a stronger voice in land use planning and better preserve our natural environment. [The Building Better Communities and Conserving Watersheds Act, 2017](#) will replace the Ontario Municipal Board with the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal, and help ensure that proceedings before the tribunal are faster, fairer and more affordable. The new legislation will also create the free Local Planning Appeal Support Centre, which will provide people across the province with information about the land use planning appeal process, legal and planning advice, and, in certain cases, may provide legal representation in proceedings before the tribunal. The act will also modernize the Conservation Authorities Act, guiding the conservation of Ontario's watersheds. The legislation clarifies the roles and responsibilities of conservation authorities and strengthens oversight and accountability. It also encourages increased public engagement by setting requirements for more public disclosure and for meetings to be open to the public. These changes will enable conservation authorities to have the flexibility to address growing environmental pressures such as climate change.*

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- Ontario is giving commuters and families in Toronto, York Region and Simcoe County more transit options by rolling out all-day weekday service along the Barrie GO rail line. Steven Del Duca, Minister of Transportation, was at Aurora GO Station today with Chris Ballard, MPP for Newmarket-Aurora, to announce that starting January 2, 2018 the province is introducing new midday and evening weekday service between Union Station and Aurora GO Station. Combined with the existing service, travellers along this section of the Barrie GO line will now benefit from all-day train service, seven days a week. The service improvements and enhancements along the Barrie GO line include:*
 - o New hourly, two-way service between Union Station and Aurora GO Station during the midday and evenings, and extra morning, afternoon and late evening trips between Bradford GO Station and Union Station*
 - o Hourly weekend GO rail service starting December 30, 2017*
 - o All GO trains will serve the new Downsview Park GO Station, connecting to the TTC Line 1 subway extension to York Region*
 - o Timed GO bus connections providing customers north of Aurora GO Station convenient access to the new GO train services.**The province is also cutting the cost of commuting for people in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area. Starting in January 2018, adult, senior, youth and student commuters will pay a*

TTC fare of just \$1.50 when they use a PRESTO card to transfer between GO Transit or the UP Express and the TTC. Adding more GO service on the Barrie Line is part of the largest rail project in Canada as Ontario transforms GO from a commuter transit system to a regional rapid transit system. Weekly trips across the entire GO rail network will grow from about 1,500 when the program began in 2015 to nearly 6,000 by 2024-25, with more all-day and 15-minute service coming to the Barrie Line.

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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.