

Monday, March 12 News

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Premier

Announcement/Avail: Affordability – Ontario is taking steps to help families afford the costs of caring for children and seniors, highlighting a package of measures that are easing the financial pressures people are facing in today's rapidly changing economy. The Premier was at the EarlyON child and family centre at St. Paul Catholic School today to talk with families about the way uncertainty in the economy is impacting their ability to care for their loved ones and keep up with the bills, and hear how the package of supports the government has announced is helping. Recent changes the government has made to make life more affordable for families at every stage include:

- § The introduction of OHIP+ to make prescription medications free for everyone under the age of 25, which has already provided over one million people with 2.3 million free prescriptions
- § Qualifying more seniors for lower prescription drug costs under the Ontario Drug Benefit program, free shingles vaccine for seniors aged 65 to 70 and expanded funding to cover the costs of fertility services
- § Building on the savings that families get from Full-Day Kindergarten, providing more Ontario children with high-quality care with a commitment to helping 100,000 more kids access licensed child care and offer additional financial support for families by providing subsidies for approximately 60 per cent of all new spaces
- § 25 per cent off hydro bills as part of the Fair Hydro Plan, with extra support for rural and low-income families
- § Free tuition at colleges and universities for more than 225,000 students, and more generous, non-repayable grants for students whose families earn up to \$175,000
- § An enhancement to the first-time homebuyers refund, expanding rent control to private market rental units in Ontario, and a Fair Housing Plan that has helped the housing market rebalance
- § A public transit tax credit that saves seniors up to \$450 and fare integration measures that have lowered the cost of commuting when transferring to and from the TTC and GO/UP Express network by about \$700 per year for the average commuter
- § Thousands of dollars available in rebates and financial support for homeowners who make energy-efficient upgrades, supported by the proceeds of Ontario's carbon market.

When factors like age, number of children and household earnings are taken into account, these steps add up to hundreds and in many cases thousands of dollars of savings per family per year. The Premier highlighted the steps taken to date in order to underline the need for government to do more to support caregivers and families. Making life more affordable is part of Ontario's plan to create fairness and opportunity during this period of rapid economic change. The plan includes a higher minimum wage and better working conditions, free tuition for hundreds of thousands of students, easier access to affordable child care, and free prescription drugs for everyone under 25 through the biggest expansion of medicare in a generation. – **Toronto – 9:00 AM**

Province-Wide

No announcements planned

Local

NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT AND MINES – Minister Mauro – NOHFC Thunder Bay Agricultural Research Association – Ontario is helping Thunder Bay area farmers improve their agricultural land, diversify crops and expand their businesses. Bill Mauro, MPP for Thunder Bay-Atikokan, was in Thunder Bay today to announce funding through the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation (NOHFC) to install tile drainage on 1,390 acres of land and to undertake land clearing on 354 acres, a project led by the Thunder Bay Agricultural Research Association in partnership with 23 local farms. This partnership between the Thunder Bay Agricultural Research Association and the farm businesses is ensuring the long-term sustainability of area farms. The new tile drainage system and land clearing will help farmers increase their crop yields by providing more available land for production and will help reduce soil erosion which will extend the growing season. Investing in agricultural infrastructure in the North is part of Ontario's plan to create fairness and opportunity during this period of rapid economic change. The plan includes a higher minimum wage and better working conditions, free tuition for hundreds of thousands of students, easier access to affordable child care, and free prescription drugs for everyone under 25 through the biggest expansion of medicare in a generation. – **Thunder Bay – 11:00 AM**

AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS – Minister Gravelle – OCIF top-up – Ontario is helping connect communities, create jobs and boost economic growth by increasing support for small and rural communities to improve roads, bridges, wastewater systems and other local infrastructure. Michael Gravelle, MPP for Thunder Bay-Superior North, on behalf of Jeff Leal, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, and Bob Chiarelli, Minister of Infrastructure, was in Dorion Township today to announce investments for upgrades to the Ouimet Canyon Road Bridge over Coldwater Creek. The existing load-restricted bridge will be replaced by a modern structure, which will enable access to the area's natural attractions for heavy emergency response vehicles, maintenance vehicles, school buses and visitors. Improved access will help increase road safety and create a better quality of life and more economic opportunities for local families and businesses. Dorion Township is one of 78 communities that will receive support from the province through the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund to build and upgrade local infrastructure. Ontario is also providing more than 420 communities across the province stable and predictable annual formula grants under the program. Investing in municipal infrastructure is part of Ontario's plan to create fairness and opportunity during this period of rapid economic change. The plan includes a higher minimum wage and better working conditions, free tuition for hundreds of thousands of students, easier access to affordable child care, and free prescription drugs for everyone under 25 through the biggest expansion of medicare in a generation. – **Dorion – 1:00 PM**

HEALTH – LTC Echo Barry's Bay – Ontario is opening six new long-term care beds in Barry's Bay to help seniors access the care they need, closer to home. These new beds are part of Ontario's commitment to create 5,000 long-term care beds over the next four years and more than 30,000 over the next decade. The new beds will be in addition to 90 existing beds at the Valley Manor Nursing Home that will be redeveloped, forming a new 96-bed home. This investment is part of Aging with Confidence: Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors, which has more than 20 new initiatives to help seniors access the supports they need. The plan includes 15 million more hours of nursing, personal support and therapeutic care for long-term care home residents, a free annual high-dose influenza vaccine for seniors, and a new one-stop website where seniors can find information about tax credits, drug coverage, powers of attorney, recreation programs and more. Improving seniors' access to the care they need is part of Ontario's plan to create fairness and opportunity during this period of rapid economic change. The plan includes a higher minimum wage and better working conditions, free tuition for hundreds of thousands of students, easier

access to affordable child care, and free prescription drugs for everyone under 25 through the biggest expansion of medicare in a generation. – **Paper Only – Time TBC**