

Wednesday, May 31 News

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Premier

Announcement and Avail: Minimum Wage Echo – Ontario is proposing the largest increase to the minimum wage in the province's history, raising it to \$15 per hour, as part of a plan to create better jobs and fair workplaces. **This will give more than a quarter of employees in the province a pay increase and will help** ensure that more workers are benefitting from Ontario's economic growth. Ontario's economy has outperformed all G7 countries in real GDP growth over the past three years, and unemployment is at a 16-year low. But the nature of work is also changing. People are working longer, jobs are less secure and benefits are not the same as they used to be. Many employees are working long hours and still struggling to support their families on the current minimum wage of \$11.40. Premier Kathleen Wynne was at the YWCA Toronto today to talk about the government's plan to increase the minimum wage to \$14 per hour on January 1, 2018, and \$15 per hour on January 1, 2019, followed by annual increases at the rate of inflation. Ontario is committed to moving forward in a balanced way. Ontario will work closely with businesses of all sizes to support them as these changes come into effect, so they can continue to succeed and keep the economy strong. Raising the minimum wage will help businesses by improving productivity, increasing employee retention and boosting the purchasing power of workers. **Creating fair workplaces and better jobs across Ontario is part of our plan to grow our economy and help people in their everyday lives.**
– Toronto – 9:40 AM

Province-Wide

ENERGY – Fair Hydro Plan Passage – Ontario passed legislation today that will lower electricity bills by 25 per cent on average for all residential customers to provide **significant** rate relief and ensure greater fairness. The Fair Hydro Act, 2017 reduces electricity bills for all residential consumers and as many as half a million small businesses and farms, starting this summer. Lower-income Ontarians and those living in eligible rural and northern communities will receive even greater reductions, as much as 40 to 50 per cent. As part of this plan, rate increases will be held to the rate of inflation for four years. These measures include the [eight per cent rebate introduced in January](#) and build on previously announced initiatives to deliver broad-based rate relief on all electricity bills. Taken together, these changes are delivering the largest reduction to electricity rates in Ontario's history. To facilitate these immediate savings, the legislation:

- Enables the Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO) and Ontario Power Generation (OPG) to work together to spread out the costs of Ontario's clean energy investments over a

longer period of time, which ensures that the costs of these investments are allocated fairly among current and future ratepayers. This will be accomplished through refinancing a portion of the Global Adjustment (GA), resulting in significant and immediate rate reductions.

- Modifies and broadens the Ontario Electricity Support Program (OESP) to expand benefits and ensure it is funded by government instead of ratepayers, reducing bills for all.
- Enhances the Rural or Remote Rate Protection (RRRP) program to provide distribution charge relief to a total of approximately 800,000 customers and shift costs from ratepayers to provincial revenues. The enhancement will benefit customers served by local distribution companies (LDCs) with the highest distribution rates. These savings will begin July 1, 2017.
- Provides on-reserve First Nations households serviced by licensed distributors with a 100 per cent credit of the delivery line on their monthly electricity bills, starting July 1, 2017.

Reducing electricity costs is part of Ontario's plan to create jobs, grow our economy and help people in their everyday lives. – **Paper Only – 12:00 PM**

HEALTH – Minister Hoskins – Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery – Ontario is honouring paramedics from across the province with the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery, given to those who have displayed exceptional acts of courage — performed on the job or off-duty — in the face of grave, personal danger. Dr. Eric Hoskins, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, will present the awards to nine paramedics in a ceremony taking place on the evening of Wednesday, May 31st at Queen's Park in Toronto. The nine recipients are being recognized for their individual acts of outstanding courage, including removing a trapped driver from a burning vehicle, helping a victim trapped in a collapsed excavation site while there was still a risk of further collapse and helping a hypothermic victim across a river. The province is thanking these nine individuals for their selfless and courageous acts, and thanking every paramedic across the province for their service. – **Paper Only – 2:00 PM**

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION – OINP: Employer Job Offer Stream, Entrepreneur Stream and Express Entry Skilled Trades Stream – Ontario is continuing to welcome newcomers while helping the province's employers attract skilled workers and responding to the needs of the labour market, with enhancements to the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program (OINP). The program allows Ontario to nominate for permanent residence people who have the skills and experience needed to contribute to the province's economy, helping employers to meet their labour needs. Ontario is enhancing the program with changes to the following streams:

- Express Entry Stream: A new pilot is being launched under this stream for workers in the skilled trades, which will help employers meet their identified need for workers in the province's booming construction and agriculture industries.
- Employer Job Offer Stream: This program is being streamlined to make it easier and faster for employers to recruit and retain highly skilled foreign workers and qualifying international students for permanent, full-time jobs.
- Entrepreneur Stream: This stream is being updated to help attracting foreign entrepreneurs who wish to implement a new business idea or buy an existing business in Ontario, to support economic growth. The minimum language requirement for this stream is being adjusted to avoid unnecessarily restricting Ontario's ability to attract foreign investment and compete with other provinces. Foreign entrepreneurs looking to establish businesses in communities outside the Greater Toronto Area will be awarded additional Expression of Interest points to help create jobs in these communities.

The province also continues to modernize the OINP application process this year with a new, paperless online system and improved customer service to help employers find the skilled workers they need sooner. Attracting and retaining skilled newcomers is part of the government's plan to create jobs, grow the economy and help people in their everyday lives. – **Bulletin Only – 3:00 PM**

ATTORNEY GENERAL – Construction Lien Act Introduction of Legislation – Ontario is modernizing provincial construction laws to address key issues and improve efficiency and competitiveness for construction businesses. Attorney General Yasir Naqvi introduced legislation today that would, if passed, modernize the lien and holdback process, introduce needed rules around prompt payment and speed up the dispute resolution process.

Key measures include:

§ Creating new prompt payment rules to give contractors and sub-contractors certainty about when

to expect payment

§ Extending the timelines to file liens and start court actions from 90 days to 150 days, giving contractors and sub-contractors time to resolve their disputes outside of court and avoid additional legal fees

§ Requiring holdback funds to be paid as soon as the deadline to file liens has passed, so contractors and sub-contractors know when to expect full payment

§ Creating an adjudication process to speed up dispute resolution and prevent disputes from delaying work on construction projects.

If passed, the legislative and regulatory changes would come into effect in 2018. Changes would support the largest infrastructure investment in hospitals, schools, public transit, roads and bridges in the province's history – more than \$190 billion over 13 years, starting in 2014–15. To learn more about what's happening in your community, go to Ontario.ca/BuildON. Updating Ontario's construction laws is part of our plan to create jobs, grow our economy and help people in their everyday lives. – **Paper Only – 3:15 PM**

Local

ATTORNEY GENERAL – Minister Naqvi – Victim Services Awards of Distinction – Fifteen remarkable individuals and organizations from across the province received the Attorney General's Victim Services Awards of Distinction today for their outstanding work on behalf of victims of crime in Ontario. The Victim Services Awards of Distinction recognize the exceptional achievements of dedicated professionals, organizations and volunteers working to raise awareness of victims' issues, advocate on their behalf and provide support when victims need it the most.

Some of the individuals and groups receiving awards this year include:

- Debra Fowler, the survivor of a near-fatal assault who became a passionate activist for domestic violence victims in her community
- Casandra Diamond, who is the founding director of BridgeNorth Newmarket, an organization dedicated to restoring the value and dignity of trafficked women
- Distress Centres' Survivor Support Program of Toronto, which offers specialized support to people affected by suicide or homicide and has many volunteers who have been affected by homicide or suicide themselves.

Attorney General Yasir Naqvi presented the awards to all 15 recipients at a ceremony today at Queen's Park. – **Bulletin – 10:00 AM**

FYI

Financial Accountability Officer to Release Economic and Fiscal Outlook

Bryan Bossin

Director, Communications Planning

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