

Back Pocket Remarks – Multicultural Media Avail
Friday, April 28, 2017

- Hello everyone. Thank you, Laura, for that introduction [Laura Albanese, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration]
- And thank you all for joining us today

Yesterday, we shared our budget

- It is our first balanced budget since the recession
- And in a moment, Minister Sousa will speak with you about how we got here and what balance means [Charles Sousa, Minister of Finance]
- But before he does, I want to talk a little about what this balanced budget allows us to do
- And our priorities for moving the province forward

What we are trying to do with this budget and as a government is speak to the very real concerns that people in Ontario have right now

- Yes, our economy is in a strong position and our budget is balanced — these are good things that we've all worked for
- But the reality is that people are anxious about their jobs and their futures
- They worry about the soaring cost of housing, the rise in part-time work and the decline in workplace benefits

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So what you see in the Budget is the foundation of our plan to address these anxieties

- There's no better place to start than investing in health care — and we've invested deeply
- OHIP+ will give everyone 24 years old and under free access to prescription drugs, filling a serious gap that's been created by many jobs no longer providing this coverage for families
- It's the biggest change to Medicare in Ontario in a generation, and a big leap towards universal drug coverage
- We're also investing in major capital hospital projects around the province and giving a big boost to hospital operating budgets
- That will mean lower wait times across the system

We're investing in education — from more child care spaces to new and repaired schools

- And this fall, 210,000 students will go to university or college for free, and thousands more will finish their studies with less debt
- We'll also help create 40,000 new co-op and intern opportunities, giving more students that all-important first line on their resume
- Parents work hard to give their kids a better life, so we're making sure they have every opportunity open to them

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Still, even those with good jobs and the right skills training can feel like they're not getting ahead despite how hard they work

- And that has a lot to do with affordability — for many, the cost of living is rising faster than their pay cheque
- So to help, we're making electricity bills more affordable for families
- And we're taking steps to take some of the heat out of the housing market, giving a break to home buyers and renters

With this balanced budget, we have the freedom and flexibility to respond to the challenges people are facing today

- There are some who look at this new world and say that government should just step back and stay out of it — let the market sort itself out — but those are not my values
- I believe there is a need for government to stand up and play an active role — working with communities to build a fair society
- It's why we're also creating a \$6 million multicultural fund
- We want to work with multicultural community groups, supporting the important work that they do
- Our diversity in Ontario is one of our greatest strengths, and this investment reflects our shared commitment to building an inclusive province

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This is the time for us to be focused, fair and bold — to not simply describe and reassert our values, but to defend them and act on them

- That's what we've done with this budget and what you will continue to see us do over the days and months ahead
- So now, I'll pass it on to Minister Sousa
- Thank you