

Minister Thibeault Bullets
Thunder Bay Budget Echo | Rexall Pharmacy

- Thank you for that kind introduction Bill [Mauro, *MPP for Thunder Bay—Atikokan*]
- It was great to be at the Victoria Inn earlier this afternoon to talk about our government's shared priorities with leaders from the Northern Ontario Municipal Association
- And to speak with you about our balanced budget
- Yes, our economy is in a strong position and our budget is balanced
- But we both know people are anxious about their jobs and their futures
- So what you saw yesterday and what we're talking about this afternoon is the foundation of our plan to address these concerns
- There's no better place to start than investing in health care — and we are investing significantly
- Bill talked about our OHIP+, which is the biggest change to Medicare in our province in a generation
- We are investing in major capital hospital projects across the province and giving a big boost to hospital operating budgets, meaning lower wait times for patients in Northern Ontario

- We're investing in education – right through the system, starting with more child care spaces
- And we're making university and college tuition absolutely free for over 200 thousand students, while others from middle-class homes will have much lower levels of student debt
- We are also focusing on those areas that will help make life more affordable through initiatives like our Fair Hydro Plan
- The Plan that Bill and I have talked about before in Thunder Bay – that's going to reduce hydro bills for families and small businesses 25 per cent on average
- We must make the right choices now to support Northerners as we set our province on a course toward long-term success and we see this budget as the foundation for that
- There are some who look at our 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 our values
- We believe there's a need for government to stand up and play an active role in building a fair society where there is more opportunity for everyone and more security too
- No one has been stronger advocates for the North at Queen's Park than Bill, Michael [Gravelle, *MPP for Thunder Bay—Superior North*] and me.
- We cannot be idle or complacent when it comes to our economy and to trade

- We cannot simply assume that the jobs of tomorrow will be available to Ontarians
- 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
- And now I'd like to welcome Bill [Mauro] back to the podium to talk more about our Budget's strong commitment to Northern Ontario