

Back Pocket Remarks — Affordability Announcement
Monday, March 12, 2018

- Hello, Bonjour, Ahnee, Bojoo — Good morning
- I am delighted to be here with all of you today to talk about the pressures families are facing — and the steps we are taking to help make life more affordable

The situation we are addressing is complicated — as the economy continues to change, it is getting harder and harder for people to get ahead

- And when families are facing these mounting pressures — whether at work or on their commute or in their pocketbook — it has a real impact in our lives and on our ability to care for our loved ones
- The challenges people are facing are causing stress and anxiety — that's the reality
- And that's something I care about deeply, because I believe in an Ontario where together, we care — and it is government's job to step up and make that possible

That is why we have been bringing forward targeted, helpful solutions to ease the pressure when it comes to the cost of things like hydro bills, child care, your kids' medications and postsecondary tuition

- The package of affordability actions we've put in place is about relieving the financial pressures families are under right now
- We've done things that touch on nearly every aspect of a person's life — from Full-Day Kindergarten to free college tuition to more support for seniors...
- But everything we are doing to make life more affordable shares one common idea
- The idea is that government has to fight to make life more affordable for families of all shapes and sizes — that together, we care

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So four years ago, we saw that certain caregivers in Ontario were undervalued, and we raised the wages of personal support workers and early childhood educators...

- These are the people who care for our parents, and our children — and they, in turn, need to be cared for by all of us
- Then we fought for an enhanced Canada Pension Plan so that when people retire, they can and will have the support they need

And over the last four years, we have consistently come forward with new actions to make life more affordable and support people who are caring for each other

- Free tuition for 225,000 students...
- The elimination of child care wait list fees and a commitment to helping 100,000 more kids access child care that includes subsidies for 60 per cent of all new spaces we're building...
- Fertility treatments for people having trouble conceiving and free shingles vaccines for seniors...
- A tax credit that is lowering the cost of public transit for seniors and a fare integration measure that is saving the average TTC-GO commuter \$700 every year...
- A Fair Hydro Plan that is saving urban ratepayers an average of \$41 a month and saving families in rural and northern Ontario even more...

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This list goes on and on because the pressures people are dealing with are many and varied, and they keep mounting

- But when we invest in fairness, opportunity and care — we can make a difference
- That's who we are — we are a province where together, we care
- We care about families like Andrew and Alyssa and their baby Sadie
- Alyssa and Sadie are here today

Over Christmas, Sadie was in the hospital for a week with a fever and she was diagnosed with kidney reflux

- It's a treatable diagnosis, thank goodness
- But it means she has to take a costly mix of antibiotics for the next few years
- Sadie's parents worried about making this big new expense work...
- So imagine how they felt when they went to the pharmacy and found out Sadie's prescription is free under OHIP Plus
- Andrew and Alyssa are saving a thousand dollars a year
- Before OHIP Plus, they'd have been in a tight spot, like so many families were
- But in the Ontario we're building, families aren't on their own — not anymore
- In fact, we have just learned that OHIP Plus has now provided free prescriptions to over 1 million children and youth

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We developed pharmacare for youth because Ontario is a place where together, we care

- And that is why together, we are making life more affordable and more fair
- But there is so much more to do
- Our upcoming Budget will be about taking the next steps to support caregivers and make life more affordable
- We are choosing to make these important investments because we know that families are under pressure and they need some relief
- As a result we'll run a small deficit of less than one per cent of GDP and chart a path back to balance
- Right now, we need more care — not cuts to the services and the supports that people rely on
- Now to tell us what the support from OHIP+ has meant for her family, it's my pleasure to introduce Alyssa to say a few words now before I take your questions