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A Plan to Build Healthier and Safer Communities

November 6, 2019

The government has a plan to build healthier and safer communities by improving patient-centred health care, creating supportive environments tailored to the individual needs of communities and providing the funding and tools that police need to fight gun and gang violence. Ontario is investing an additional \$1.3 billion this year in critical services, which includes more funding for small- and medium-sized hospitals, public health units, child care and programs to help our most vulnerable.

Patient-Centred Health Care

The challenges facing our health care system are daunting. The previous administration left Ontario with a health care system that could not keep up with the demands of rapidly growing communities and an aging population. The province's hospitals are overcrowded and reaching a breaking point. The status quo is no longer an option.

That is why the government is delivering on its commitment to end hallway health care with a plan to build a more modern, connected and sustainable public health care system. Ontario is taking steps to give patients and their families security and peace of mind, while receiving health care when and where they need it.

Ontario is increasing health care spending by \$1.9 billion in 2019–20. This includes an additional \$68 million this year to support small- and medium-sized and multi-site hospitals to help maintain critical capacity and respond to increased demand in communities across the province.

The government is investing \$17 billion in capital grants over the next 10 years to create a better care experience, build more capacity within the health care system and expand hospital infrastructure.

The new Digital First for Health strategy would also improve access and make health care more convenient. It could allow patients to see doctors virtually and allow doctors to provide more service options to patients.

To further reduce barriers to care, Ontario is investing \$3.8 billion over 10 years to create a comprehensive, connected system of mental health, addictions services and housing supports.

The Province is committed to ensuring seniors age with dignity. That is why the government is also developing a long-term care staffing strategy to address the increasingly complex needs of long-term care residents. To further build capacity, the government has committed to add 15,000 new long-term care beds in five years, and to redevelop 15,000 existing beds to modern standards.

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Safer Streets

For the well-being of the people of Ontario, the government is building safer communities together. The Province is providing the funding and tools that police need to fight gun and gang violence and put violent offenders behind bars.

To keep Ontario streets safe, the government is investing in new key initiatives to support more communities in their fight against gun violence and gang activity. Key new investments include a Gun and Gang Violence Fund to support projects and partnerships in the GTA and the Greater Golden Horseshoe area targeting organized crime and gang operations; and a dedicated team in Eastern Ontario, comprised of four Assistant Crown Attorneys, to provide prosecutorial support for complex investigative projects in partnership with the Ottawa Police Service.

These initiatives are part of Ontario's comprehensive strategy, which represents \$105.4 million in new investments from the provincial and federal governments to combat gun and gang violence on all fronts across Ontario.

Protecting the Most Vulnerable

Another way the government is building safer communities is with a plan to protect the most vulnerable Ontarians, including seniors, children and women.

Ontario is supporting children with autism by investing an additional \$278.5 million in the province's autism programs, bringing the total funding to \$600 million annually, the most funding per capita of any jurisdiction in Canada. The government is also protecting the safety and well-being of children and families by making changes that would enable more responsive and accessible services.

To protect the women and children of Ontario, the government is fighting human trafficking. The Province is developing a strategy to combat human trafficking by raising public awareness, supporting victims and bringing traffickers to justice.

Supporting Inclusion and Accessibility

The government is investing \$1.07 million in 2019–20 to support the Abilities Centre in Whitby to advance inclusion and accessibility for people of all ages and abilities. The investment will expand current programming and enable the Centre to engage with community partners, school boards and municipalities to identify service gaps and design various pilot projects.

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Protecting Ontario's Animals

The government is also strengthening animal protection, so animals can get the protection they deserve and that the people of Ontario expect. A new enforcement model and new legislation would ensure appropriate and effective measures, including the toughest penalties in the country for animal abuse.

Preserving the Environment

The government is committed to protecting and preserving the environment for the benefit of people today and in the future. This begins with a new vision for Ontario that protects and respects hard-working taxpayers, while promoting environmental stewardship.

Ontario's first-ever climate change impact assessment will seek the best science and information to better understand where the province is vulnerable and which regions and economic sectors are most likely to be impacted. This enhanced understanding will help the Province, local communities, businesses, Indigenous communities and the public be more prepared for the costs and impacts of a changing climate, and guide future decision-making.

Ontario needs to take action to reduce waste and divert it from landfills. Public education about the significance of this environmental challenge is a key component of building confidence among the people of Ontario. That is why the government intends to recognize an official Day of Action on Litter. Ontario's first annual Day of Action on Litter would be on May 12, 2020.