

## Protect – Urgent COVID-19 Response

### **Ontario's Action Plan: Protect, Support, Recover *provides \$15.2 billion to protect people during COVID-19***

The Ontario government has committed to do whatever it takes to protect people during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the first wave, the government delivered the resources necessary to help hospitals and public health units stop the spread of the virus, to support frontline health care workers, and to protect vulnerable populations including seniors and residents of long-term care.

Building on its unprecedented response, the government is making significant investments to prepare for future waves of COVID-19, with a focus on health care and long-term care. This includes investments set out in the *Fall Preparedness Plan for Health, Long-Term Care and Education* (Fall Preparedness Plan) and earlier phases of *Ontario's Action Plan*. Ontario's plan to protect people through the second wave, and beyond, builds on the government's urgent response to COVID-19 and provides \$15.2 billion in total resources.

### **Ontario's COVID-19 health response**

The government's plan to protect the people of Ontario includes built-in flexibility to help keep people safe through the second and any future waves of COVID-19. This includes \$2.8 billion for the Province's six-pillar Fall Preparedness Plan.

- Maintaining strong public health measures, including a \$1.4 billion investment to continue expanding testing and case and contact management while supporting COVID-19 testing at pharmacies and in communities.
- Implementing the largest flu immunization campaign in Ontario's history by purchasing 5.1 million doses of the influenza vaccine at a cost of \$70 million — the highest number of doses ever purchased.
- Identifying, managing and preventing COVID-19 outbreaks by strengthening infection prevention and control across hospitals and long-term care homes with an investment of \$60 million. An additional \$540 million in new funding will help protect residents, caregivers and staff in long-term care homes from future surges, including \$405 million to help homes continue prevention and containment through enhanced screening, staffing supports, and purchasing additional supplies and PPE.
- Accelerating efforts to reduce surgical backlogs while ensuring hospitals have the capacity to manage COVID-19 and the influenza season by investing \$283.7 million to address the backlog and enable over 60,000 surgeries.
- Preparing for surges in COVID-19 cases by alleviating pressure on hospitals and the broader health care system through expanded access to home and community care services, expanding community paramedicine programs and ensuring hospitals have bed and staff capacity, with an investment of an additional \$116.5 million to add up to 766 additional beds across the province. This means Ontario has invested \$351 million to create more than 2,250 hospital beds to give the system capacity to address COVID-19 surges in this second wave.

- Recruiting, retaining and supporting more than 3,700 frontline health care workers and caregivers with a \$52.5 million investment to ensure our health care system can meet any surge in demand.
- Purchasing nearly \$1.1 billion in personal protective equipment (PPE) and other critical supplies to protect our health care workers, patients and people across the province. This investment has purchased nearly 300 million masks, 900 million gloves, 50 million gowns and over 6 million face shields.

The Ontario government is also:

- Protecting workplace health and safety by hiring 98 new occupational health and safety inspectors, an increase of 24 per cent, so that Ontario has more active inspectors than at any time in its history. The province has developed more than 200 sector-specific safety guidance resources and will renew Ontario's occupational health and safety strategy.
- Committing \$30 million over two years to help service providers in the social services sector continue infection prevention and control measures.

## Protecting our loved ones in long-term care

The government is going to extraordinary lengths to protect and provide proper care for Ontario's growing senior population during the COVID-19 crisis. Significant investments are being made to address the longstanding challenges in the sector to provide modern facilities, more staff, increased care and additional beds. Specific initiatives include:

- Increasing average daily direct care from a nurse or personal support worker (PSW) to four hours a day, making Ontario the leader among Canadian provinces in terms of care provided to loved ones. This ambitious plan requires significant changes in the long-term care sector, including recruiting and training tens of thousands of new staff. The government will collaborate with its partners throughout implementation over the next four years.
- Accelerating development of new and upgraded beds through an investment of \$1.75 billion that will increase long-term care capacity and access for residents by building 30,000 long-term care beds.
- Fast-tracking the construction of four new long-term care homes in Toronto, Mississauga and Ajax through the innovative Accelerated Build Pilot Program, which will open 1,280 new beds in the region by early 2022.
- Launching a Community Paramedicine for Long-Term Care pilot program to help seniors remain stable in their own homes while on the waitlist to access a long-term care bed. This innovative program will provide 24/7 access to non-emergency support so people can stay in their homes longer.
- Advancing a long-term care staffing strategy to confront long-standing challenges faced by chronically overworked staff in long-term care and provide more direct care. This includes accelerating and expanding qualification pathways to increase the supply of qualified health professionals.
- Standing behind frontline PSWs and direct support workers by providing \$461 million in temporary wage increases for over 147,000 workers who deliver publicly funded personal support services.

## Supporting people suffering from mental health and addictions challenges

COVID-19 has had significant impact on mental health and addictions (MHA) across the province. During the first wave of the COVID-19 outbreak, the government invested \$26.75 million to support more than 39,000 people in accessing a range of virtual and local MHA supports, including the safe resumption of some in-person counselling.

The Province is making a \$3.8 billion investment over 10 years in its MHA Roadmap to Wellness, which will guide development of a comprehensive and connected mental health and addictions system that is sensitive to the needs of Ontario's diverse population.

This year, the Roadmap includes \$176 million in 2020–21 to help expand access for critical mental health and addictions support and reduce wait times, including:

- Additional community supports in both English and French, with a focus on stabilizing and enhancing mental health and addictions service delivery, as well as mobile crisis teams and safe beds to support those experiencing a mental health crisis.
- More core children and youth mental health services, including walk-in clinics, counseling and therapy, day treatment and live-in treatment supports, focused on helping children in school, keeping children out of child welfare and supporting those in need of intensive services.
- Additional supports to Indigenous peoples, seniors, those with disabilities, first responders and vulnerable populations.

The province is also increasing mental health funding for postsecondary students by investing \$19.25 million into mental health supports for postsecondary students in 2020–21, an increase of \$3.25 million over last year.

## Continuing the commitment to a strong health care system

The government is steadfast in its commitment to continue to build a strong health care sector that meets the needs of people in Ontario now and in the future. Ontario will protect people by:

- Investing an additional \$572 million in Ontario's hospitals to support additional costs of COVID-19 including testing, assessment centres, laboratory and medical equipment and PPE. This brings the total funding to hospitals above and beyond what was provided last year to over \$2.5 billion.
- Building new and expanded hospital infrastructure, creating much-needed capacity by investing more than \$18 billion in capital grants over 10 years. This funding will also allow hospitals to prioritize urgent upgrades, including repairs and maintenance, to help modernize facilities across the province.
- Managing wait times and backlog by providing additional funding to add 17,000 new MRI operating hours and the following new service volumes: 180 additional neuroservices procedures, 3,413 additional cardiac procedures and over 6,000 additional procedures related to hip and knee replacements, cataracts, stroke, cancer and renal care. The government will also be screening 140,000 Ontario newborns for spinal muscular atrophy.

## **Calling for greater investments in health care**

COVID-19 has underscored the need for a renewed long-term funding partnership between the federal government and the provinces and territories. Ontario continues to call on the federal government to address the long-term sustainability of health care systems by rebalancing the health care funding arrangement and re-establishing a full funding partnership through an immediate significant increase to the Canada Health Transfer to cover at least 35 per cent of provincial–territorial health spending.