

Protecting People's Health

Ontario continues to take every necessary action to stop the spread of the COVID-19 virus while making record investments in the health care system.

The *2021 Budget — Ontario's Action Plan: Protecting People's Health and Our Economy*, brings Ontario's total investments to protect people's health since the start of the pandemic to \$16.3 billion. This spending will help:

- Defeat COVID-19 so that one day soon we can continue with our daily lives without fear of the pandemic.
- Fix decades of neglect and underinvestment in long-term care so that the seniors who built this province can live a life of dignity and comfort.
- Care for people and communities and strengthen our health care system for future generations.

Defeating COVID-19

The approval of COVID-19 vaccines is a significant step forward in putting the pandemic behind us and moving towards better days. Team Ontario is mobilized to get vaccines into arms as quickly as they become available and the Province is investing more than \$1 billion to support the administration, distribution and rollout of Ontario's COVID-19 vaccination campaign.

Steps Ontario is taking to ensure everyone who wants a vaccine can get one, include:

- Delivering a three-phase plan to distribute vaccinations that mobilizes the entire health care infrastructure, including public health units, hospitals, pharmacies, mass vaccination clinics, mobile clinics and doctors' offices.
- Helping to remove barriers to accessing COVID-19 vaccines with \$3.7 million to provide safe, accessible transportation for persons with disabilities and older adults with limited mobility to their COVID-19 vaccination appointments.
- Supporting community-led vaccination efforts in First Nations and urban Indigenous communities with \$50 million to support the vaccine rollout, including more public health capacity and greater access to testing.

While the people of Ontario are being vaccinated, Ontario continues to take urgent action to protect people from COVID-19, including:

- Supporting the ongoing COVID-19 response with more than \$3.7 billion over two years for Ontario's comprehensive testing strategy, including \$2.3 billion in 2021–22, to ensure timely access to testing, to target testing to vulnerable communities and to expand the capacity to process tests effectively.

- Protecting people who are disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, such as those living in racially diverse, newcomer and low-income communities, with more than \$50 million to support improved access to testing, community outreach, vaccine access, isolation facilities and emergency income supports.

Fixing long-term care

The COVID-19 pandemic has further exposed long-standing challenges in the long-term care system. Residents, caregivers and staff — and their loved ones — deserve better. This is why Ontario is investing an additional \$650 million in long-term care in 2021–22, bringing the total resources invested since the beginning of the pandemic to over \$2 billion to protect the most vulnerable.

Ontario is taking urgent action to fix long-term care, including:

- Increasing long-term care capacity and access with an additional \$933 million over four years, for a total of \$2.6 billion. Approvals of new and upgraded beds to date represent more than two thirds of the government’s commitment to build 30,000 new beds by 2028, as well as 15,198 upgraded spaces.
- Investing \$246 million over the next four years to improve living conditions in existing long-term care homes, including air conditioning, so loved ones can live in comfort, and with safety, dignity and respect.
- Providing the best long-term care in Canada by investing \$4.9 billion over four years to increase the average daily direct care for long-term care residents from 2.75 hours to four hours.
- Delivering on a provincial staffing strategy that will improve working conditions for staff in long-term care homes and accelerate and expand education and training pathways in the most ambitious recruitment and training program in Ontario’s history. This includes more than \$121 million to accelerate the training of nearly 9,000 personal support workers (PSWs).
- Attracting PSWs and nurses to work in retirement homes with financial grants of \$5,000 for PSWs for a six-month commitment and \$10,000 for nurses for a one-year commitment.

Caring for people

After the pandemic has ended, Ontario's health care system will continue to face significant challenges, including higher demands as a result of growing communities and an aging population. Ontario is acting now so that people across the province can continue to access the care they need —where and when they need it.

While Ontario is doing its part with \$69.8 billion in base health sector funding in 2021–22, and a further \$5.1 billion in dedicated COVID-19 health response funding, the federal government needs to do more. Ontario continues to call on the federal government to step up and immediately pay its fair share of at least 35 per cent of provincial–territorial health care spending so people can access the care and other critical provincial programs they depend on today and into the future.

To ensure that the province's hospitals can continue to deliver high-quality care, Ontario is:

- Investing an additional \$5.1 billion to support hospitals since the pandemic began, creating more than 3,100 additional hospital beds — the equivalent of six large community hospitals. This includes \$1.8 billion in 2021–22 to continue providing care for COVID-19 patients, address surgical backlogs and keep pace with patient needs.
- Putting patients first with a capital plan investment of \$30.2 billion over 10 years to build and renew hospital infrastructure, including an additional \$3 billion since the *2020 Budget*. This includes:
 - New hospital and other expansion projects in the Region of Peel and surrounding areas through collaboration with Trillium Health Partners and William Osler Health System. These investments will support historic hospital expansion and construction projects, including a new inpatient wing at Peel Memorial in Brampton.
 - Supporting the redevelopment of older hospitals in Collingwood, Bowmanville and Markdale, expanding the London Health Sciences Stem Cell Transplant Unit, and supporting the ongoing planning of a new regional hospital in Windsor-Essex.

To improve access to and delivery of critical children's services, Ontario is providing additional funding to build a new children's treatment centre in Ottawa as part of the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, as well as a new children's treatment centre in Chatham-Kent.

To help the thousands of people struggling with mental health and addictions issues, Ontario is:

- Providing additional funding of \$175 million in 2021–22 as part of the historic investment of \$3.8 billion over 10 years for mental health and addictions services.
- Creating four new mobile mental health clinics to provide a full suite of mental health and addictions services to individuals living in remote, rural and underserved communities.
- Investing \$8.4 million over three years to embed mental health workers in Ontario Provincial Police communications centres to provide support to individuals facing a mental health crisis — including helping them find and access existing services.
- Ensuring that postsecondary students have the supports they need during COVID-19 with an additional \$7 million invested in 2020–21 to increase access to on-campus and virtual mental health and addiction services. This builds on the investment of \$19.25 million announced in October 2020.

To support safe, strong communities, Ontario is:

- Increasing access to safe and affordable housing and supporting people experiencing homelessness with \$255 million in new funding to respond to rising COVID-19 cases in shelter settings, building on the \$510 million already provided through the Social Services Relief Fund, as well as other investments in the Transitional Housing Support Program and the Adult Protective Service Worker program.
- Helping seniors stay in the homes they love, longer, by implementing the Seniors' Home Safety Tax Credit for 2021. This new credit, announced in November 2020, will provide an estimated \$30 million in support for about 27,000 seniors and people who live with senior relatives.
- Supporting children and youth with special needs to live happier and healthier lives by investing \$240 million over four years to increase access to critical services.
- Addressing systemic racism by investing an additional \$1.6 million over two years to support community-based anti-racism initiatives, building on Ontario's previous investment of \$60 million over three years for the Black Youth Action Plan.