



Ontario's Action Plan: Responding to COVID-19

The government's action plan is a first step in its response to COVID-19. This \$17 billion response is a critical first step to ensure our health care system, communities and economy are positioned to weather the challenges ahead. It includes \$7 billion in additional resources for the health care system and direct support for people and jobs. We understand the pressing need for cash flow, hence \$10 billion is available in support for people and businesses through tax and other deferrals to improve their cash flow, protecting jobs and household budgets, such as:

- Making available \$6 billion by providing five months of interest and penalty relief for businesses to file and make payments for the majority of provincially administered taxes.
- Over \$1.8 billion by deferring the upcoming June 30 quarterly municipal remittance of education property tax to school boards by 90 days, which will provide municipalities the flexibility to, in turn, provide property tax deferrals to residents and businesses, while ensuring school boards continue to receive their funding.
- Making available \$1.9 billion by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) allowing employers to defer payments for up to six months

Key initiatives in the government's plan to strengthen its response to the COVID-19 outbreak and support people, families, workers and employers include:

- Helping families pay for the extra costs associated with school and daycare closures during the COVID-19 outbreak by providing a one-time payment of \$200 per child up to 12 years of age, and \$250 for those with special needs, including children enrolled in private schools.
- Proposing to double the Guaranteed Annual Income System (GAINS) payment for low-income seniors for six months.
- Supporting more affordable electricity bills for eligible residential, farm and small business consumers, by providing approximately \$5.6 billion for electricity cost relief programs in 2020-21, which is an increase of approximately \$1.5 billion compared to the 2019 Budget plan.
- Further supporting more affordable electricity bills by setting electricity prices for residential, farm and small business time-of-use customers at the lowest rate, known as the off-peak price, 24 hours a day for 45 days to support ratepayers in their increased daytime electricity usage as they respond to the COVID-19 outbreak, addressing concerns about time-of-use metering.
- Cutting taxes by \$355 million for about 57,000 employers through a proposed temporary increase to the Employer Health Tax (EHT) exemption.
- Providing \$9 million in direct support to families for their energy bills by expanding eligibility for the Low-income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP) and ensuring that their electricity and natural gas services are not disconnected for nonpayment during the COVID-19 outbreak.



- Providing emergency child care options to support parents working on the front lines, such as health care workers, police officers, firefighters and correctional officers.
- Expanding access to the emergency assistance program administered by Ontario Works to provide financial support to people facing economic hardship and help more people meet basic needs such as food and rent during this public health emergency.
- Enhancing funding by \$148 million for charitable and non-profit social services organizations such as food banks, homeless shelters, churches and emergency services to improve their ability to respond to COVID-19, by providing funding directly to Consolidated Municipal Service Managers and District Social Service Administration Boards who would allocate this funding based on local needs.
- Providing six months of Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) loan and interest accrual relief for students, leaving more money in people's pockets.
- Helping to support regions lagging in employment growth with a proposed new Corporate Income Tax Credit, the Regional Opportunities Investment Tax Credit.
- Providing additional supports of \$26 million to Indigenous peoples and communities, including emergency assistance for urban Indigenous people in financial need, and costs for health care professionals and critical supplies to reach remote First Nations.

The plan includes \$3.3 billion in additional health care resources to protect the health and well-being of the people of Ontario. We are ensuring that our front-line health care professionals have the resources they need to fight the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Committing to a dedicated \$1.0 billion COVID-19 contingency fund for emerging needs related to the COVID-19 outbreak. Investing \$935 million for the hospital sector, including \$594 million to accelerate progress on the government's commitment to address capacity issues, as well as \$341 million for an additional 1,000 acute care and 500 critical care beds and additional assessment centres.
- Increasing public health funding by \$160 million to support COVID-19 monitoring, surveillance, and laboratory and home testing, while also investing in virtual care and Telehealth Ontario.
- Investing \$243 million for surge capacity in the long-term care sector, as well as funding for 24/7 screening, more staffing to support infection control, and supplies and equipment to help tackle the COVID-19 outbreak.
- Investing \$75 million to supply personal protective equipment and critical medical supplies to front-line staff to tackle COVID-19.

The March 2020 Economic and Fiscal Update provides planning assumptions for the year ahead. The government will provide regular updates of the Province's fiscal and economic outlook throughout the year. As a result of the response to the COVID-19 outbreak, the government is planning for a deficit of \$20.5 billion in 2020–21. The government will release a multi-year provincial Budget by November 15, 2020. This responsible approach will allow the government



to continue assessing the economic situation and put forward a long-term outlook based on the most recent and reliable data.

Social distancing remains a key component in reducing the spread of this virus and we must all do our part. Think of your local food bank, and those in need. I am proud of how Oakville residents have cooperated on COVID-19 – stay strong.

We urge the business community to share their innovative ideas and capabilities to fight COVID-19 through our new portal Ontario Together at www.ontario.ca/OntarioTogether.

To use the COVID-19 self-assessment tool, or to stay up-to-date regarding Ontario's actions on COVID-19, please visit: www.ontario.ca/coronavirus

If you have symptoms, please call Telehealth at 1-866-797-0000 or call your local public health unit.

Sincerely,

Stephen Crawford, MPP for Oakville