

The 2021 Ontario Budget released on March 24th, 2021, outlines Ontario's next steps to defeat COVID-19. It brings total investments to \$16.3 billion to protect people's health and \$23.3 billion to protect Ontario's economy. The first two phases of the Action Plan, which were also primarily framed as budgets, can be reviewed [here](#) and [here](#). As with those, this plan is focused on expenditures related to the COVID-19 response and recovery, with a more pronounced emphasis on the latter. There are no new funding or policy announcements specific to local public health agencies.

alPHa is pleased to provide the following summary and links to keep our members informed.

- Online Index to the 2021 Budget, which includes text and video summaries and links to all related documents is [here](#).
- The full Budget can be read online and downloaded [here](#).
- The Minister's speech is [here](#).
- alPHa's Pre-Budget Submission can be viewed [here](#).

MENTIONS OF PUBLIC HEALTH:

"Public health" is mentioned a total of 33 times in the main document, the most significant of which are excerpted below. Most of these refer to the public health role in the vaccination campaign. All instances not captured here are more generic, with "public health restrictions" appearing frequently as the context for the economic hardships that this budget aims to remedy as part of the economic recovery. Please note that page numbers refer to those that appear in the document itself.

"While hope is on the horizon with vaccine distribution underway, public health modelling demonstrates that because of new variants of concern, there continues to be risks related to the future path of the pandemic. This is why Ontario's focus today continues to be protecting people's lives and livelihoods from the virus" (p. 3).

"The key to defeating COVID-19 is ensuring every person who wants a vaccine gets a vaccine. Working with partners — including the federal government and local public health units — to vaccinate the people of Ontario is the government's most urgent priority" (p. 28).

"Phase One of Ontario's vaccination rollout is well underway, and as of early March 2021, over 80 per cent of the long-term care residents are fully immunized and public health units are working with homes to vaccinate staff and essential caregivers as a priority." (p. 30).

"As the supply of vaccines increases, the people of Ontario will be able to get vaccinated in several new settings. In addition to hospitals, mobile clinics and mass vaccination clinics, the province is working with

the pharmacy sector and with primary care professionals to offer vaccinations in primary care settings and community locations in collaboration with public health units.” (p. 30).

“The plan activates the entire health care infrastructure, including public health units, hospital clinics, mass vaccination sites, mobile clinics, pharmacies and primary care. On the ground, the plan is adapting to the unique situation of each of the province’s 34 public health units, reflecting the diverse populations and vast geography of the province — all with the aim of vaccinating the people of Ontario as soon as possible.” (p. 31).

“Ontario is investing \$50 million to support community-led vaccination efforts in First Nations and urban Indigenous communities. This investment will provide additional health care supports, including more public health capacity and greater access to testing in Indigenous communities. This funding will also help to set up onsite clinics to support vaccine roll-out, working with Indigenous communities.” (p. 31).

“Since the beginning of COVID-19, Ontario has invested over \$100 million in dedicated IPAC funding, including a significant increase in capacity and measures for both prevention and response. Building on this investment, Ontario is investing \$50 million in 2021–22 to ensure IPAC resources and expertise are available across the health system including hospitals and public health units as well as other congregate settings.” (p. 52)

“Making Progress on Addressing Unregulated Tobacco: Since 2020, the government has been consulting on unregulated tobacco with public health stakeholders, industry and retail associations, as well as First Nations partners. Building on the commitments made in the 2020 Budget, the Province has launched engagement with First Nations on tobacco in February 2021. These conversations are being led by independent Indigenous facilitators and are essential to informing solutions to unregulated tobacco. This engagement with First Nations will support the development of a made-in-Ontario tobacco strategy.” (p. 209).

HIGHLIGHTS – SECTION A: PROTECTING HEALTH

Defeating COVID-19

- To vaccinate every person in the province who wants to be vaccinated, Ontario has made more than \$1 billion available for a provincewide vaccination plan. Ontario is also making it safer to re-engage with workplaces, businesses and communities, with \$2.3 billion for testing and contact tracing.
- To protect the frontline heroes and vulnerable people, Ontario has made available \$1.4 billion for personal protective equipment, including more than 315 million masks and more than 1.2 billion gloves.
- To ensure every person who requires care in a hospital can access a bed, even during the worst of the pandemic, the government is investing an additional \$5.1 billion to support hospitals since the pandemic began, creating more than 3,100 additional hospital beds. 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.

Fixing Long-Term Care

- To address decades of neglect and help those waiting to get into long-term care, Ontario is investing an additional \$933 million over four years, for a total of \$2.6 billion, to support building 30,000 new long-term care beds. Ontario is also investing \$246 million over the next four years to improve living conditions in existing homes, including ensuring homes have air conditioning for residents, so loved ones can live in comfort and with safety, dignity and respect.
- To protect loved ones in long-term care from the deadly COVID-19 virus, Ontario is investing an additional \$650 million in 2021–22, bringing the total resources invested since the beginning of the pandemic to protect the most vulnerable to over \$2 billion.
- To ensure loved ones receive the best quality care in Canada, Ontario is investing \$4.9 billion over four years to increase the average direct daily care to four hours a day in long-term care and hiring more than 27,000 new positions, including personal support workers (PSWs) and nurses.

Caring for People

- To address the need for more health care services, Ontario is making investments to support historic hospital expansion and construction projects, including a new inpatient wing at William Osler Health System's Peel Memorial and ongoing planning of a new regional hospital in Windsor-Essex. The government is also investing in the creation of new children's treatment centres in Ottawa and Chatham-Kent to increase access to critical programs and services.
- 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 ten years, to provide more and better care for everyone who needs it.
- To assist survivors of domestic violence — which has increased during COVID-19 — and other heinous crimes like human trafficking, Ontario is investing an additional \$2.1 million over three years to support victims of crime. This support is in addition to funding provided through various existing programs to help victims of domestic violence and other violent crimes.
- To make progress in our collective efforts to address systemic racism, Ontario is making additional investments in key communities. This includes investments of \$1.6 million over two years to support the Anti-Racism and Anti-Hate Grant program, which will support community based anti-racism initiatives focusing on anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. This builds on a \$60 million investment in the Black Youth Action Plan.

HIGHLIGHTS – SECTION B: PROTECTING OUR ECONOMY

Supporting Workers and Families

- To help workers with their training expenses, the government is proposing a new Ontario Jobs Training Tax Credit for 2021. It would provide up to \$2,000 per recipient for 50 per cent of eligible

expenses, for a total of an estimated \$260 million in support to about 230,000 people in 2021.

- To help families — who have faced new pressures and expenses due to the pandemic — keep more money in their pockets, the government is providing a third round of payments to support parents through the Ontario COVID-19 Child Benefit, totalling \$1.8 billion since last March. The payment will be doubled to \$400 per child for this round and \$500 for each child with special needs, which means a family with three young children, one of whom has special needs, will receive \$2,600 in total after the third round of payments.
- To support parents with the cost of child care and help them get back to the workforce, the government is proposing a 20 per cent enhancement of the CARE tax credit for 2021. This would increase support from \$1,250 to \$1,500, on average, providing about \$75 million in additional support for the child care expenses of over 300,000 families.
- To help seniors stay in the homes they love, longer, Ontario has introduced the Seniors' Home Safety Tax Credit for 2021. This new credit will provide an estimated \$30 million in support for about 27,000 seniors and people who live with senior relatives.

Supporting Jobs

- To help small businesses that have been most affected by the necessary restrictions to protect people from COVID-19, Ontario is providing a second round of Ontario Small Business Support Grant payments to eligible recipients. Approximately 120,000 small businesses will automatically benefit from an additional \$1.7 billion in relief through this second round of support in the form of grants of a minimum of \$10,000 and up to \$20,000 — bringing the estimated total support provided through this grant to \$3.4 billion.
- To support Ontario's tourism, hospitality and culture industries, that have been among the most heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, Ontario is investing an additional \$400 million over the next three years in new initiatives to support these sectors. This builds on previously announced investments of \$225 million, bringing the total to more than \$625 million since the pandemic began.
- To connect homes, businesses, and communities to broadband — which COVID-19 has demonstrated is a necessity, not a luxury — Ontario is investing \$2.8 billion, bringing the Province's total investment to nearly \$4 billion over six years beginning 2019–20.
- To encourage business investment in certain regions of the province that have lagged in employment growth in the past, Ontario is proposing to temporarily enhance the Regional Opportunities Investment Tax Credit by investing an additional \$61 million, resulting in total tax credit support of about \$155 million by 2022–23.

Supporting Communities

- To support faith-based and cultural organizations that are struggling due to the additional costs caused by COVID-19, Ontario will be making up to \$50 million available for grants to eligible organizations.

- To support Ontario’s 444 municipalities, the province’s key partners in the fight against COVID-19, the government is providing almost \$1 billion in additional financial relief in 2021 to help preserve vital public services and support economic recovery. This builds on the \$4 billion in federal–provincial support provided to communities across the province under the historic Safe Restart Agreement. Ontario joins municipalities in our continued calls for the federal government to step up and provide, at minimum, a matching amount of federal funding to these important new provincial investments.
- To support long-term economic growth and sustainable public finances, the government must evolve and become more modern, along with the rest of the world. Ontario is committed to supporting a modern government that puts citizens at the centre of every action we take. [Ontario’s Action Plan: Protecting People’s Health and Our Economy](#) provides a progress update on our *Ontario COVID-19 Action Plan for a People-Focused Government* and the \$500 million Ontario Onwards Acceleration Fund.

We hope that you find this information useful.