

VIEW FROM QUEEN'S PARK: Ontario's investments are creating jobs for today and tomorrow

By Chris Ballard, MPP

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The government introduced its 2016-2017 budget recently and it contains good news for families, seniors and businesses in our riding.

The Province's economic plan supports good jobs across Ontario by investing in infrastructure and in a low-carbon economy, driven by innovative, export-oriented businesses. The plan invests in people's talents and skills and their ability to get and create the jobs of the future by expanding access to high-quality college and university education.

The plan also helps all Ontarians achieve a more secure retirement.

Many Aurora residents are worried about the state of the economy and how it might affect them and their families. That is why the 2016 Budget was presented earlier than in past years so that Ontario families and businesses can see how the government is building on its plan to create jobs and grow the economy, while creating more opportunity and security for people.

For the past months, news reports have focused on bad economic news as oil producing provinces and the federal government revenues are battered by low oil prices. But they are not in Ontario.

Things are better in Ontario. Our economic plan is working. Ontario's economy is growing. In fact, experts now say our economy will grow by 2.2 per cent in the coming year and is on track to, once again, be the economic engine of Canada.

Ontario is taking action on climate change by investing all the proceeds from cap and trade in green projects and positioning Ontario to thrive in the low-carbon economy of the future. The government has also taken action to manage overall electricity system costs and remains committed to building cleaner and more sustainable energy and electricity systems for Ontarians.

Our government is modernizing student financial assistance by making postsecondary education more accessible and affordable.

These changes will make average college or university tuition free for students from families with incomes of \$50,000 or less.

The changes will also make tuition more affordable for middle-class families. The new tuition system is better for a number reasons, but chief among them is the timing of tuition aid. Letting postsecondary students know exactly how much aid they can expect before they enroll should encourage more to take the plunge. And, as non-government experts have recently written, telling students they need to pay only \$500 for a year of studies seems to have a more positive effect than telling them they have to pay \$6,000, but will receive \$5,500 in grants.

To make everyday life easier for all Ontarians, including seniors, students, Indigenous peoples, families and low-income people, the government is investing in education, skills training and high-quality health care. To get people, goods and services moving faster, the government is making the largest public infrastructure investment in Ontario's history \$160 billion over 12 years starting in 2014?15 to build roads, bridges, public transit, hospitals and schools.

I have worked hard at Queen's Park for improved GO Train service to this riding, and it is paying off. This year will see dozens of new weekend GO Train trips between Aurora and Union Station and we are on track for improved service Monday to Friday.

And, we are continuing to transform our province's universal health care system to ensure faster access to the right care for all Ontarians. The Province plans to provide \$12 billion over 10 years in capital grants to hospitals to continue building essential infrastructure and we are increasing funding to hospitals by \$345 million. Across the province, approximately 35 major hospital projects are under construction or in various stages of planning. I will work closely with Southlake Regional Health Centre to ensure its needs are heard at Queen's Park.

The unemployment rate declined to 6.8 per cent in 2015, below the national average and down from 7.3 per cent in 2014. And since the global recession, Ontario has created more than 600,000 new jobs, with the majority in the private sector and in industries that pay above-average wages, and all in full-time positions. The government is projecting the creation of more than 300,000 additional jobs by the end of 2019, which would bring total job creation to more than 900,000 over a 10-year period evidence that our plan is working.

The government is on target and on schedule to eliminate the deficit, while continuing to make investments in jobs, economic growth and a low-carbon future. For 2015?16, the deficit is forecast to be \$5.7 billion, which is \$2.8 billion lower than forecast in the 2015 Budget and \$1.8 billion lower than projected in the 2015 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review. The government is projecting a deficit of \$4.3 billion in 2016?17, and a balanced budget in 2017?18.

Our plan is working. We will continue to implement our plan, investing in Ontario today to grow the economy, create jobs and build

the Ontario we all want for tomorrow.

I invite you to contact me on any issue. Please call my community office at 905-750-0019, or visit my website at www.ChrisBallardMPP.ca. My email is: cballard.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org. I look forward to hearing from you.