

Government of Ontario releases 2023 budget, deficit projected to be \$2.2 billion]

Written By **Brian Lockhart**

Ontario's Minister of Finance, Peter Bethlenfalvy, has released the province's 2023 budget.

"Ontario's economy remains resilient, but the road ahead continues to be uncertain," Mr. Bethlenfalvy said. "Our government has the right plan to navigate these challenges. We are building Ontario so we can have a strong economy for the future and the infrastructure needed to support growth across the province."

A statement from Sylvia Jones, MPP Dufferin-Caledon, said: "The government's plan is taking significant actions to drive growth by lowering costs, getting key infrastructure projects built faster, and attracting more jobs and investment to help businesses, families, and workers."

"Our budget focuses on investing in infrastructure, the economy and the people of Ontario," Ms. Jones said. "This plan supports families, workers and businesses across the province and invests in critical programs and services that residents in Dufferin-Caledon rely on as we build a stronger Ontario."

The plan for lowering costs and getting key infrastructure projects built faster includes launching the new Ontario Made Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit, which would provide a 10 per cent refundable corporate income tax credit to help local manufacturers lower costs and invest in workers.

Ontario is attracting over \$16 billion in investments from global automakers and suppliers of EV batteries and battery materials. The province will provide \$24 million this year for a new capital stream of the Skills Development Fund to leverage private-sector expertise and expand training centres.

The government also plans to support more seniors financially by proposing changes to expand the Guaranteed Annual Income System to see 100,000 additional seniors eligible for the program. And the government plans to invest in supportive housing with an additional \$202 million each year in the Homelessness Prevention Program and Indigenous Supportive Housing Program and support community organizations' delivery of supportive housing.

The province intends to help more Ontario students become doctors by investing an additional \$33 million over three years to add 100 undergraduate seats beginning in 2023 and 154 postgraduate medical training seats to prioritize Ontario residents trained at home and abroad.

Starting in fall 2023, the program will expand to allow pharmacists to prescribe over-the-counter medication for more common ailments.

For mental health and addiction issues, the province is providing an additional \$425 million over three years to connect more people to mental health and addiction services.

The provincial government is also providing an update on Ontario's economic and fiscal outlook, with a plan that will balance the budget in 2024-25, three years earlier than forecast in the last budget.

Ontario's 2022-23 deficit is projected to be \$2.2 billion. The government is projecting a deficit of \$1.3 billion in 2023-24 and is on track to post a surplus of \$0.2 billion in 2024-25.

Ontario's real GDP grew by an estimated 3.7 per cent in 2022 and is projected to increase by 0.2 per cent in 2023.