

# Ontario's Action Plan: Responding to COVID-19

Given the global uncertainty during an unprecedented public health crisis, economic outlooks are changing at a rapid pace. In order to provide a financial update that is as current as possible, the government of Ontario is releasing a one-year economic and fiscal update that is based on the best information available.

[Read the economic and fiscal update](#)

*Ontario's Action Plan: Responding to COVID-19* outlines the government's \$17 billion response to ensure our health care system, communities and economy are positioned to weather the challenges ahead.

[Read the action plan](#)

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## Direct supports for the health care system, people, families, workers and employers

*Ontario's Action Plan: Responding to COVID-19* outlines the first steps in the Province's plan to tackle the COVID-19 outbreak. The action plan will provide \$7 billion in additional resources for the health care system and will provide direct support for people, and jobs. This includes \$3.3 billion in additional health care resources, \$3.7 billion to support people and jobs, and measures that will make available up to \$10 billion in support for people and businesses through tax and other deferrals to improve their cash flows, helping protect jobs and household budgets.

### **\$3.3 billion of additional resources for health care, including:**

- \$2.1 billion in new measures to support the COVID-19 response with:
  - A dedicated \$1 billion COVID-19 contingency fund;
  - \$341 million for hospital capacity to increase assessments and treatment;
  - \$243 million for long-term care home emergency capacity and virus containment measures;
  - \$100 million more for public health;
  - \$170 million for community capacity, homecare and Telehealth Ontario;
  - \$62 million for health care workers in assessment centres, hospitals and the community;
  - \$75 million for personal protective equipment and critical medical supplies;
  - Approximately \$80 million for ambulance and paramedic services; and
  - Approximately \$70 million for infection control measures in retirement homes, residential facilities and emergency shelters.
- An additional \$1.2 billion to meet demand for services in the health and long-term care sector.

### **\$3.7 billion to support people and jobs, including:**

- \$75 million in urgent additional support for 194,000 low-income seniors by proposing to double the [Guaranteed Annual Income System \(GAINS\)](https://www.ontario.ca/page/guaranteed-annual-income-system-payments-seniors) (https://www.ontario.ca/page/guaranteed-annual-income-system-payments-seniors), maximum payment to \$166 per month for individuals and \$332 per month for couples for six months, starting in April 2020;

- Helping families pay for extra costs associated with school and daycare closure during the COVID-19 outbreak by providing a one-time \$200 payment per child up to 12 years of age, and \$250 for those with special needs, including kids enrolled in private schools;
- Providing six months of [Ontario Student Assistance Program \(OSAP\)](https://www.ontario.ca/page/osap-ontario-student-assistance-program) loan and interest accrual relief for student borrowers, in partnership with the federal government;
- Providing new, additional support 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;
- \$200 million in new funding to provide temporary emergency supports for people in financial need as well as funding to municipalities and other service providers so they can quickly respond to local needs;
- Making electricity bills more affordable for eligible residential, farm and small business consumers through a \$1.5 billion increase in electricity cost relief compared to the *2019 Budget*. In addition, the Province is also setting electricity prices for 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;
- \$9 million in direct support to families for their energy bills by expanding eligibility for the [Low-income Energy Assistance Program \(LEAP\)](https://www.oeb.ca/rates-and-your-bill/help-low-income-consumers/low-income-energy-assistance-program) and ensuring that their electricity and natural gas services are not disconnected for nonpayment during the COVID-19 outbreak;
- Cutting taxes by \$355 million for about 57,000 employers through a proposed temporary increase to the [Employer Health Tax \(EHT\)](https://www.fin.gov.on.ca/en/tax/ehl/index.html) exemption;
- Helping to support regions that have been lagging in employment growth with a proposed new Corporate Income Tax credit — the Regional Opportunities Investment Tax Credit; and
- Supporting the timely delivery of critical food and supplies by amending a regulation that restricted delivery trucks from operating during off-peak hours.

### **\$10 billion in support for people and businesses to improve cash flows by:**

- Providing [a five-month interest and penalty-free period](#) to make payments for the majority of provincially administered taxes, providing \$6 billion in relief to help support Ontario businesses when they need it the most
- Deferring the upcoming quarterly (June 30) remittance of education property tax to school boards by 90 days. This will provide municipalities with the flexibility to, in turn, provide property tax deferrals of over \$1.8 billion to local residents and businesses while ensuring school boards receive their funding.
- Providing up to \$1.9 billion in financial relief by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) allowing employers to defer payments for up to six months

## **Responsibly Managing Ontario's Finances**

*Ontario's Action Plan: Responding to COVID-19* builds on the government's responsible approach to managing Ontario's finances with measures to provide further flexibility to respond to this rapidly changing global outbreak. This includes historic levels of prudence, including a dedicated \$1.0 billion COVID-19 contingency fund as part of the additional health care investments, as well as unprecedented \$2.5 billion reserve and an increased contingency fund of \$1.3 billion to provide continued flexibility to respond to changing global circumstances.

The Province will continue to actively monitor and mitigate risks, coordinating with partners and other levels of government, while continuing to retain flexibility to respond as conditions evolve.

**Learn More**

1. [Read the news release \(http://news.ontario.ca/mof/en/2020/03/ontarios-action-plan-responding-to-covid-19.html\)](http://news.ontario.ca/mof/en/2020/03/ontarios-action-plan-responding-to-covid-19.html)
2. [Read the Minister's Statement](#)

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