



June 18, 2025

The Honourable Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario, (premier@ontario.ca)

The Honourable Peter Bethlenfalvy, Minister of Finance, (peter.bethlenfalvy@pc.ola.org)

I am writing on behalf of the Anglican Diocese of Toronto in response to Ontario's 2025 budget, "A Plan to Protect Ontario." This year's provincial budget is framed as a bold plan to "protect Ontario in the years and decades to come" from the economic impacts of US tariffs. Unfortunately, it falls short of protecting Ontarians, especially those currently experiencing poverty and homelessness, much less those who will be added to their ranks by the impacts of tariffs and related economic shocks. It also includes no commitment to protecting Ontario's environment or reducing our greenhouse gas emissions, which are on track to increase.

We want to acknowledge several welcome measures contained in this budget, chiefly in the areas of healthcare, training and support for workers, and investments in municipal and regional transit infrastructure.

The \$1.8 billion investment in Ontario's Primary Care Action Plan, announced in January 2025, will help connect hundreds of thousands of Ontarians to primary care this year, with the goal of connecting every Ontarian with primary care by 2029. Additional investments in training for healthcare providers are also welcome. Investments in building and expanding hospitals and adding or redeveloping long-term care beds will help Ontario care for its growing and aging population.

While most of the measures announced to cushion the blow of tariff impacts are directed toward businesses, we were glad to see the announcement of \$20 million in training and support for laid-off workers, an additional \$50 million this year for the Better Jobs Ontario program, and an additional \$1 billion over the next three years for the Skills Development Fund. The creation of the Trade-Impacted Communities Program will also help local communities and industry sectors respond to trade disruptions and promote procurement from Canadian and Ontario suppliers.

We were also glad to see the continuation of the One Fare program, along with investments in municipal and regional transit.

However, we are deeply disappointed to see little or no acknowledgement in this budget of the crises Ontarians are facing in terms of affordability, housing, and climate, much less measures to address these crises.

A record number of Ontarians are facing hunger and homelessness, with over a million relying on food banks in the past year¹ and over 81,000 facing "known" homelessness – figures which could rise exponentially with an economic downturn due to tariff or other impacts². Yet Ontario Works remains frozen at the same rate since September of 2018, during which time the cost of living in Ontario has gone

¹https://feedontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/FEED_Ontario_HungerReport24.pdf

² <https://www.amo.on.ca/sites/default/files/assets/DOCUMENTS/Reports/2025/2025-01-08-EndingChronicHomelessnessinOntario.pdf>



up more than 20%.³ By refusing not only to raise OW, but to index it to inflation, this government leaves Ontarians who are struggling even further behind.

The Ontario Disability Support Program is at least indexed to inflation, but rates continue to leave recipients in deep poverty, with incomes less than 60% of the poverty line. We are grateful for the recent announcement that Ontario will exempt the Canada Disability Benefit as income for social assistance recipients, which will at least protect the provincial benefits they already receive.

The current provincial Poverty Reduction Strategy ends this year, yet the 2025 budget makes no mention of poverty or poverty reduction. Nor does it include measures that will reverse the trend of low-income Ontarians falling into ever deeper poverty.

The 2025 budget also falls dismally short of addressing Ontario's housing crisis. It projects fewer than 75,000 housing starts this year – less than half of the government's own goal of 150,000 new homes per year and 15% fewer than in 2024. Support to make housing more affordable is limited to investments in infrastructure for new housing developments and tax relief for purpose-built rental housing. While the budget announces a measure allowing municipalities to reduce property taxes on affordable rental housing, this does not create new affordable housing but starves municipalities of the income they need to address housing and other needs. Indeed, we are dismayed at recent actions by this government to reduce affordable housing targets already put in place by municipalities.

The additional \$75.5 million for homelessness prevention was announced in 2024 and does not represent new spending for 2025 or future years. Rather, the budget focuses on the government's provision of new enforcement tools to municipalities and police to arrest and sentence people experiencing unsheltered homelessness. These measures will not house one single Ontarian, but rather will criminalize people in deep poverty, while, as the Association of Municipalities of Ontario points out, creating "significant operational challenges for municipalities."⁴

It is disappointing, but hardly surprising given its punitive approach to Ontarians experiencing homelessness, that this budget provides funding for the creation of 952 new beds in provincial jails, but funding for only an estimated 560 supportive housing units. Since accommodating someone in jail is much more expensive than providing them supportive housing, this also represents significant costs to Ontario taxpayers.

Increased investment in addictions treatment and mental health is welcome, but this budget fails to specify the number of treatment beds that will be added in connection with the shift from supervised consumption sites to HART hubs, and \$303 million over three years to stabilize the community mental health and addictions services sector is far from what is needed.

Climate impacts are already costing Ontarians billions in terms of climate-related extreme weather, infrastructure damage, and negative health outcomes. The Financial Accountability Office projects that in the absence of adaptation, climate hazards will add \$4.1 billion per year on average to the cost of maintaining Ontario's public infrastructure in a medium emissions scenario⁵. Yet this budget contains no

³ <https://cdhowe.org/publication/brian-lewis-fully-indexing-ontario-social-assistance-long-overdue/>

⁴ https://www.amo.on.ca/sites/default/files/assets/DOCUMENTS/SocialServices/2025/2025-05-23-AMO_Submission_Bill_6.pdf

⁵ <https://fao-on.org/en/report/cipi-summary/>



mention of climate change or measures to address or mitigate climate hazards. What it does contain is further investments – nearly \$30 billion over ten years – to expand highways, despite road transportation accounting for the largest contribution to Ontario’s greenhouse gas emissions.⁶ Further, while the climate costs of maintaining public infrastructure in Ontario fall primarily on municipalities, this budget restricts the ability of municipalities to create bike lanes and prohibits municipalities from using revenue tools like road tolls or personal vehicle taxes to help offset their climate costs and balance their budgets.

Despite its record total of \$232.5 billion in spending and the promise of “bold and lasting change”, the 2025 budget falls far short of measures that will address the crises of affordability, housing, and climate change, particularly for the most vulnerable Ontarians. Ontario’s per capita spending remains the lowest among all provinces in Canada, and according to this budget outlook, the province will spend less per capita (adjusted for inflation) in 2027-28 than it did in its first year in office in 2018-19. During that same period, tax cuts have resulted in a 7.7 billion loss in revenues which limit the provinces capacity to respond boldly to the challenges we face, whether internal or external. The million Ontarians relying on food banks, and the hundreds of thousands experiencing or at risk of homelessness, and all Ontarians who depend on a healthy environment, deserve more from a plan to protect Ontario.

Yours faithfully,

The Right Reverend Kevin Robertson
Bishop Suffragan of Toronto

⁶ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/ontario-carbon-emissions-ghg-inventory-1.7191765>