

Wynne Lashes Out At Ford; Says 'He Will Set Us Back'

TORONTO: Premier Kathleen Wynne says the choice in the spring election will be between care provided by her Liberals, or cuts that would come from the Tories led by Doug Ford.

In a speech delivered a day after her government tabled a budget that moved the province back into deficit, Wynne singled out Ford, saying he will set Ontario back if elected. Wynne says Ford would have to make deep cuts to balance his budget. She also says Ford's policies would give corporations and the wealthy tax cuts.

Ford has said a Tory government would focus on tackling the provincial debt, which is projected to be \$325 billion in 2018-2019. Ford highlighted the budget's income tax proposal during his news conference Wednesday.

"Today's budget includes massive — I repeat, massive — tax hikes," Ford said. "I'm not going to go after 1.8 million people and increase their taxes, charge them \$200 more when they're already struggling with the highest hydro rates in North America."

Ontario's election will be held on June 7.

Promises, Promises In Ontario Budget

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The Liberals' fiscal record is likely to come under scrutiny as the party, which has held power for 15 years, fights to stay in government.

While much of the big-ticket spending was announced prior to the budget, the fiscal blueprint builds on a pledge made in last week's throne speech: a drug and dental-care program for people without existing coverage.

The program, scheduled to launch in summer 2019, is expected to cost \$800 million over the first two years. It will reimburse participants up to 80 per cent of eligible drug and dental expenses per year to a maximum of \$400 per single person, \$600 per couple, and \$700 per family of four. The budget also includes a new initiative that would provide \$750 annually to help seniors aged 75 or older live independently, offsetting the costs of maintaining their homes.

The program, starting in 2019-2020, would cost \$1 billion over three years.

Newly minted Progressive Conservative Leader Doug Ford said he was skeptical about the Liberals' plans. A Tory government, he said, would focus on tackling the provincial debt.

"You can't take care of the most vulnerable people in society when you have billions of



Ontario's Premier Kathleen Wynne (centre) sits next to Provincial Finance Minister Charles Sousa (right) as the Ontario Provincial Government delivers its 2018 Budget, at the Queens Park Legislature in Toronto, on Wednesday. The Canadian Press/Chris Young

dollars in debt," he said. "We're paying a billion a month servicing the debt. Do you know how many families we could help for a billion a month? That's what we have to start focusing on, taking care of our finances."

NDP Leader Andrea Horwath, who earlier this month introduced her party's own dental-care plan, called the budget a "meagre" attempt to get votes.

"I really don't accept this suggestion that this budget is a left budget," she said. "Yes, it's left — it left a lot of people out. It left a lot of people out of pharma-

care, it left a lot of people out of

child care, it left a lot of people out of dental care."

Ontario Public Service Employees Union President Warren "Smokey" Thomas called the Liberal spending package a "buy me" budget ahead of the spring vote. "There's a lot of promises," he said. "A lot of the promises are back-ended. A lot are multi-year. A lot don't kick in until 2019. The political spin will be, 'If you want all of this, you've got to vote for us.'" Health advocates also voiced concerns about how long it would take to get the funding.

"It's a lot of window-dressing but the concrete money is not

there and it's so many years away that we really fear that it just won't even happen," said Natalie Mehra, executive director of the Ontario Health Coalition.

Seniors will get further support as the government's OHIP+ pharmacare program — which currently covers those under 25 — expands to include seniors aged 65 and older.

Another centrepiece is the Liberals' recently announced \$2.2-billion plan to provide free child care for preschoolers starting in 2020. The budget also lays out health-sector spending announced last week, including a base funding increase of \$822 million for hospitals.

That comes after Ontario's Financial Accountability Officer warned that a growing and aging population is adding pressure to the health-care system and spending isn't keeping up — a situation that could result in compromised quality of care if left unaddressed. The budget does not include any new major revenue streams.

It introduces a plan to restructure the province's tax brackets and eliminate a surtax paid by filers. As a result, 8.6 million individuals would pay roughly the same tax this year, 1.8 million would pay approximately \$200 more, while about 680,000 would see a tax reduction of about \$130 on average.

Facebook Revamps Privacy Settings After Data Scandal

WASHINGTON: Facebook on Wednesday announced an overhaul of its privacy tools that will make it easier for users to find and edit the personal information the company holds.

The move followed intense criticism of the social media giant after it emerged that data of about 50 million users had been harvested and passed on to political consultancy firm Cambridge Analytica, the BBC reported.

The London-based political

research organisation, which collaborated with the election campaign of Donald Trump in the runup to the 2016 US vote, used the leaked information to develop a computer programme to predict the decisions of US voters and influence them.

However, Facebook said the revamp was already in the works ahead of the scandal in order to comply with new EU rules.

The announcement coincided with a fresh dispute with New

Zealand's privacy watchdog, which accused Facebook of being in breach of local laws. The changes fall into three categories. At present, mobile users see a list of about 17 different options, each of which is marked by a short title.

However, the new version re-groups the controls and adds descriptions to make it simpler.

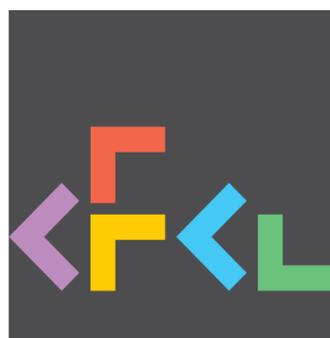
Now, there is a new privacy shortcuts menu. The dashboard brings together what the firm said

"were the most critical controls into a single place. It suggested this will make it faster for people to do things such as review the posts they have shared or reacted to, and to limit the information used to target ads at them.

Also, a new page called Access Your Information allows users to review past interactions with the site — including the things they have "liked" and the comments they have posted — with the option to make deletions.

Members will be able to download specific categories of data — including their photos — from a selected time range, rather than only being able to export a single file that might take hours to get.

The action preceded the EU's General Data Protection Regulation, which will come into force on May 25. The new law will toughen the requirements on how organisations handle the public's data, as well as impose harsher penalties for breaches.



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