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**Ontario Added More Than 175,000 Jobs in 2017**

Province Focused on Supporting Workers and Growing the Economy Employment in Ontario increased by 176,300 from December 2016 to December 2017. The increase represents a 2.5 per cent growth in jobs in 2017, just over double the growth rate recorded in each of the previous two years. The Ontario unemployment has been below the national average for 33 consecutive months and below six per cent for the past five months -- a first since 2000. More than 800,000 net new jobs have been created in Ontario since the recessionary low. The majority of these jobs are full-time, in the private sector, and in industries that pay above-average wages. According to the 2017 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review, by 2020, over 200,000 more net new jobs are expected to be created in the province. The government recognizes that not everyone has shared in this growth, and many workers are still facing challenges.

On January 1, the minimum wage rose to \$14 an hour, helping millions of people across the province support their families and get ahead in a changing economy. On January 1, 2019, the minimum wage will increase to \$15 an hour. Ontario's plan to create fairness and opportunity during this period of rapid economic change includes a higher minimum wage and better working conditions, free tuition for hundreds of thousands of students, easier access to affordable child care, and free prescription drugs for everyone under 25 through the biggest expansion of medicare in a generation. QUICK FACTS Employment in Ontario increased by 1,900 in December — the sixth straight month of gains — and the unemployment rate remain unchanged at 5.5 per cent. Employment growth has occurred in many economic regions across the province, year-over-year increases include Stratford-Bruce-

Peninsula (4.3 per cent), Toronto (4.1 per cent) and Northwest (3.1 per cent). The employment increase was led by monthly gains in the transportation and warehousing and educational services sectors. Ontario's Business Growth Initiative is a five-year commitment of more than \$650 million to grow the economy and create jobs by promoting an innovation-based economy, helping small companies scale-up and modernizing regulations for businesses. "We have worked hard to ensure an economic environment that is positive and allows the private sector to create good jobs and workers to earn a decent living. Our government will keep doing our part by supporting a dynamic business climate and promoting fairness and opportunity for everyone." — Brad Duguid, Minister of Economic Development and Growth

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