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## Over 220,000 Young People in Ontario Already Benefitting from OHIP+

More Than 4 Million Children and Youth Now Have Access to Over 4,400 Prescription Drugs for Free  
 Only 11 days into the new year, more than 220,000 young people age 24 years and under have had their prescriptions filled at no cost through OHIP+: Children and Youth Pharmacare. On January 1, Ontario made the biggest expansion to medicare in a generation by providing drug coverage to over four million children and youth. More than 350,000 prescriptions have been filled to date under OHIP+ and the numbers continue to grow, making a real difference in the lives of people and families across the province. Under OHIP+, more than 4,400 medications are covered, including asthma inhalers, drugs to treat depression, anxiety, epilepsy and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, antibiotics, epinephrine auto-injectors like EpiPens, insulin, diabetes test strips, oral contraceptives, some medications to treat childhood cancers and other rare conditions, and many others. All people need to do is present their Ontario health card number along with a valid prescription for an eligible medication at an Ontario pharmacy and the medicine will be provided free of charge.

A recent Conference Board of Canada report estimated that 1.2 million people in Ontario age 24 years and under did not have any drug coverage before OHIP+. 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

Ontario is the first province to provide prescription medication coverage at no cost for children and youth age 24 years and under. Enrolment is automatic and there is no annual deductible or co-payment. OHIP+ covers prescription medications listed on the Ontario Drug Benefit Formulary and additional medications eligible for funding through the Exceptional Access Program if an individual qualifies and it is prescribed by a doctor or nurse practitioner.

## NDP demands Wynne stop \$15M hydro bill redesign

QUEEN'S PARK – Ontario NDP Energy Critic MPP Peter Tabuns is demanding that Kathleen Wynne stop a plan to force families to pay \$15 million for redesigned hydro bills.

Hydro One's bills were redesigned in 2017 and buried deep in Hydro One's March 2017 distribution rate increase application to the Ontario Energy Board is a plan to further redesign the bills – with a total cost of \$15 million. That expense is being used to prop up Hydro One's request to hike hydro bills yet again.

"Families are struggling to keep up with the 300 per cent increase they have seen to hydro rates under the Liberal government," said Tabuns. "Kathleen Wynne and her privatized Hydro One seem to think the problem with hydro bills is that people have trouble reading them. I disagree. I think the problem with hydro bills is that they're too high – and a redesign to justify hiking them further doesn't help families one bit."

Wynne has already come under fire for the hydro bill redesign, since she passed an Order in Council to force partisan Liberal messaging in defense of the high cost of hydro onto every hydro bill in the province until the next provincial election. Minister of Energy Glenn Thibeault and Deputy Premier Deb Matthews – who is also the Ontario Liberal Party's campaign chair – personally signed that Order in Council.

"I think of people like Sharon in Sault Ste. Marie. Andrea Horwath met Sharon, who is 80 years old, last year -- and saw first-hand how Sharon bundles up in layers and has blankets piled up everywhere in her home because she simply can't afford the high cost of hydro to keep her home warm," said Tabuns. "I don't think Sharon needs a redesigned hydro bill. I think she needs a lower hydro bill."

"People are seeing the cost of decades of Conservative and Liberal privatization coming right out of their pockets, and it has to stop."

Ontario NDP Leader Andrea Horwath and the NDP have released a plan to substantially cut hydro bills for Ontario families and businesses, which includes bringing Hydro One back into public hands, ending mandatory time-of-use pricing and other fixes to the broken hydro system. Tabuns said it's a plan that's offering hope to families, coming from a leader they can count on to deliver.

The Hydro One rate increase application is the same 2,076-page document that proposes switching families to pre-pay hydro meters.

Ontario's public drug programs already help to pay for needed prescription medications for seniors, people with high drug costs and other vulnerable populations — marking one of the many ways Ontario is leading a national discussion on the future shape of pharmacare in Canada.

"It's exciting to see the significant impact that OHIP+ is making in the lives of hundreds of thousands of young people across Ontario. By providing access to more than 4,400 prescription medications at no cost to all children and youth age 24 and under, we are removing the financial barriers that can prevent them from getting the essential care they need to stay healthy. It's an important first step towards our vision of a universal pharmacare system for everyone in Ontario." — Dr. Eric Hoskins, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care

"Organizations that support our most vulnerable population are seeing the benefit of incredible programs like OHIP+. Massey Centre once covered medication costs of clients who could not afford them, but now, with OHIP+, we can put that money towards our services that help hundreds of young moms, their children and families in our community." — Ekau Asabea Blair, CEO, Massey Centre

"It is an ease on the mind and pocket knowing my children are taken care of in that area." — Creig Treloar, young father of two young children

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