

Legislative  
Assembly  
of Ontario



Assemblée  
législative  
de l'Ontario

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**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

F-6

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

F-6

**Standing Committee on  
Finance and Economic Affairs**

Committee business

**Comité permanent  
des finances  
et des affaires économiques**

Travaux du comité

2<sup>nd</sup> Session  
42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament

Thursday 16 December 2021

2<sup>e</sup> session  
42<sup>e</sup> législature

Jeudi 16 décembre 2021

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Chair: Ernie Hardeman  
Clerk: Michael Bushara

Président : Ernie Hardeman  
Greffier : Michael Bushara

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Thursday 16 December 2021

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

COMITÉ PERMANENT DES FINANCES  
ET DES AFFAIRES ÉCONOMIQUES

Jeudi 16 décembre 2021

*The committee met at 1000 in committee room 2 and by video conference.*

## COMMITTEE BUSINESS

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Michael Bushara):** Good morning, honourable members. In the absence of the Chair and Vice-Chair, it is my duty to call upon you to elect an Acting Chair. Are there any nominations? Mr. Bouma.

**Mr. Will Bouma:** I would nominate MPP Thanigasalam as Chair.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Michael Bushara):** Does the member accept the nomination? Are there any further nominations? There being no further nominations, I declare the nominations closed and Mr. Thanigasalam elected as Acting Chair of the committee.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam):** Good morning. Thank you all. We'll begin now.

Before we move on to any business, I will do an attendance check. I will ask members the following questions: If they are present and to confirm that they are, in fact, the honourable members and to confirm they are in Ontario. Are there any questions before we begin?

MPP Ian Arthur?

**Mr. Ian Arthur:** Good morning, everyone. This is Ian Arthur and I am in Kingston, Ontario.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam):** Thank you. MPP Will Bouma?

**Mr. Will Bouma:** Yes, Chair, I am indeed Will Bouma and I'm in my home office in St. George, Ontario.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam):** Thank you. MPP Stephen Crawford?

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** Yes, good morning, Chair and committee members. It's Stephen Crawford. I'm in Oakville.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam):** Thanks. MPP Mitzie Hunter?

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Hi. Good morning, everyone. It's Mitzie Hunter and I am in Toronto.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam):** Thank you. MPP Logan Kanapathi?

**Mr. Logan Kanapathi:** Good morning, everyone. Logan Kanapathi, MPP from Markham-Thornhill.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam):** Thank you. MPP Sol Mamakwa?

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** Good morning, everyone. Good morning, Chair. I'm here in Treaty 3 territory in Ontario. Meegwetch.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam):** Thank you. MPP Jeremy Roberts?

**Mr. Jeremy Roberts:** Good morning, Chair. MPP Roberts here and I am in Ottawa.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam):** Thank you. MPP Dave Smith?

**Mr. Dave Smith:** Good morning, Chair. I'm MPP Dave Smith and I'm in Belleville.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam):** MPP Fife?

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Good morning, Chair and committee members. I'm Catherine Fife, MPP for Waterloo, where I currently reside.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam):** Thank you. MPP John Yakabuski?

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Good morning, Chair and members of the committee. MPP John Yakabuski, and I am in Ontario.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam):** Thank you.

Are there any questions before we begin? Seeing none, on the agenda for today, we have consideration of committee business. Are there any motions? MPP Bouma.

**Mr. Will Bouma:** Yes, thank you, Chair. Through you, I move that the committee enter closed session for the purposes of organizing committee business, and that broadcasting staff be permitted to remain in the closed session meeting for the purposes of operating the electronic meeting technology.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam):** MPP Bouma has requested a closed session. I see MPP Fife. Please go ahead.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Good morning, Chair, and thank you for stepping in this morning and chairing this important meeting.

Chair, this is the same pattern that we've seen from this government time and time again, where they move government business, the people's business, behind closed doors. This budget consultation that we are about to discuss has a huge impact on the people of Ontario and, quite honestly, they have the right to hear the conversation. They have the right to hear what their representatives are saying about that consultation, how extensive it will be, in what kind of manner we will be advertising, in what kind

of manner we will be reaching out to communities to make sure that we have heard all of the concerns of Ontarians. Quite honestly, at this stage in the game, the consultation process that this government has set up to date has not truly reflected the needs of the people that we serve.

I know that there will be a lot of interest in this budget consultation process, especially after last year's was sidelined by the government. The people want to have their voices heard and they want to hear why the government continues to move this basic conversation about how we're going to come to meet with the people of Ontario behind closed doors. I know for a fact and I know that many members on this committee have already heard from folks who are very concerned, for instance, about the Bradford Bypass. A hundred groups took out a full-page ad last week in the Toronto Star to lodge their concerns and their complaints with the way that this government has made decisions.

People are going to want to talk about child care, and so we're going to have to make sure that ECEs and parents have the right to come to this committee and voice their extreme disappointment in this government failing to reach a contract with the federal government.

Even rapid tests—every single day, there is a new issue that concerns Ontarians. We here in Waterloo region do not have pop-up rapid-test availability, despite what the Premier said yesterday.

There are so many concerns that Ontarians have with the way that this government has spent money or not spent money, and I feel like there's no win for the government to move this behind closed doors. There really isn't. Meet the people in the open, in public session, so that they can hear what the plans are for the budget 2022 consultation process. They have every right to be disappointed if this government moves these discussions behind closed doors.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam):** Is there any other debate? MPP Hunter.

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** I'm incredulous as to the rush for us, as a committee, each and every time. We call a meeting, we don't disclose the purpose of the meeting so that members of the committee, who are representing constituencies, can prepare for that, and then we immediately move to go behind closed doors to have a secret discussion. It just doesn't really serve the needs of the public, who expect transparency.

Chair, we have an urgent crisis situation right now, and our responsibility as representatives of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs is to ensure that the government is spending the people's money and resources appropriately. Our case count today is 2,421 new cases. It's an exponential growth, yet still there is an unwillingness from the government to really openly hear from people.

I'm concerned mainly about the way that we are going about this in a secret way, in a way that doesn't really let people have a chance to come forward and to engage with this committee, where they could be offering ideas and suggestions or areas in which they need help and

assistance and support as we face this public health emergency right now, with the sweeping effects of the Omicron variant across our province. So there's a lot of concern.

**1010**

As we are going into a session where it's not open, it's not transparent, I do want to register that complaint, because even just in terms of how we notify people of the opportunity to have consultations—are we proactively doing that? Are we sending out information and inviting people to join? I don't mean that they have to discover on it on the Ontario Legislative Assembly website. That's something that is important in terms of posting it, but it's passive. Unless someone goes to that, they don't know. Are we proactively advertising and inviting people to come forward before this committee so that we can hear their input on the upcoming budget? I think it is their right, and I think we should be doing all we can to hear from Ontarians and to get those ideas on record by listening and consulting in an open and transparent manner.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam):** MPP Fife?

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Before we take this meeting, reluctantly, in camera—because the government has a majority of the votes—I do want a recorded vote on this motion that's before us. I do want to get on the record that the nurses in Ontario want to be heard at budget committee. Teachers want to be heard. PSWs want to be heard. Front-line health care workers, who still don't have access to appropriate PPE, want to be heard. People who are manufacturing N95 masks right here in Waterloo region want their say as to why they can't get the government to procure those masks. And, certainly, I know that there are many stakeholders in the Ring of Fire who have been dismayed by the way that this government is conducting themselves, once again, on that major infrastructure project.

This is my only opportunity to make sure that the committee hears that these are stakeholders who fear that they have not been listened to by this Ford government, and they want to make sure that they're going to be heard during this budget 2022 budget consultations.

With that, I would love to hear from the government as to why they think that this conversation needs to go behind closed doors, but to date, we've heard silence on that.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam):** MPP Fife has asked for a recorded vote. Are the members ready to vote? Oh, MPP Mamakwa, please go ahead.

**Mr. Sol Mamakwa:** Meegwetch, Chair. I just want to make a quick comment about going into a closed session. I know I've only been here about three and a half years or so, but I think one of the things—I don't know what the value is in going into a closed session. What is the value? But I'll say this much: I know with what we do, the system that's there within the halls of Parliament—it is nothing but partisan politics. I know, sometimes, all the heckling that happens, it's a place where victory is when you put

somebody down. That is your guys' system. That is your system. That is not my system.

With these committee meetings that we've had, I always talk about on-reserve issues, and I have found that this place is an institution that ignores the minority, such as Indigenous people who live on reserves, and the rules, the procedures that we have here, pass as if they're governance. I think I can see what you're doing. It's just partisan survival, that's what it is, where the party is greater than the people. Meegwetch.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam):** Is there any other debate? I see none.

During the voting process, if we have any technical difficulties or lose video of a member, we will conduct the vote through a roll call process. I'll start by asking, "Are members ready to vote?" and the Clerk will call out each voting member's name. You can reply "aye" for a vote in favour, "nay" for a vote against. If you would like to abstain from voting on the matter, we are asking you to actually say "abstain" so that we can know for sure that

the reason you haven't answered isn't because of any technical difficulties.

Are the members ready to vote?

**Ayes**

Bouma, Crawford, Kanapathi, Roberts, Dave Smith, Yakabuski.

**Nays**

Arthur, Fife, Hunter, Mamakwa.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam):** I declare the motion carried.

We'll now move into closed session. Please give us a moment.

*The committee continued in closed session at 1018.*

## **STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS**

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Ms. Catherine Fife (Waterloo ND)

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford PC)

Ms. Mitzie Hunter (Scarborough–Guildwood L)

Mr. Logan Kanapathi (Markham–Thornhill PC)

Mr. Sol Mamakwa (Kiiwetinoong ND)

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