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111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 1 March 2022

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 1^{er} mars 2022

Report continued from volume A.

FEWER FEES, BETTER SERVICES
ACT, 2022
LOI DE 2022
POUR DE MEILLEURS SERVICES
ET MOINS DE FRAIS

Continuation of debate on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 84, An Act to enact two Acts and amend various other Acts / Projet de loi 84, Loi visant à édicter deux lois et à modifier diverses autres lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member from Brantford—Brant is up for a question.

Mr. Will Bouma: I always appreciate interacting with the member from Hamilton Mountain. Mr. Speaker, it's been so good to hear so many positive comments coming from the opposition benches over this bill over the last week and a half. You know, you can almost call it a vote of confidence in the ability of our government to reduce red tape. It was so good to hear positive comments from the member opposite, too, throughout all the schedules of the bill. We've heard this afternoon that they'll be supporting it, as they have been, and even skipping committee.

I was wondering if the member could explain to the House exactly which schedule was the tipping point for her, that made the difference that she's supporting the bill. I would appreciate that.

Miss Monique Taylor: Members of my caucus have been working really hard on this side of the House on many aspects of this bill. The traffic act—sorry, whichever act it is—that has the 412, 418, that's the member from Oshawa. Her hard work has gone into this. The member from Waterloo and the procurement portion of the bill. The Indigenous children is something that no one can turn their eye from. It is important that we are doing everything we can. And as an opposition to a majority government, the only thing that we can do is support along for those little tidbits that they're going to give us. When we're in government, those things will be much greater. We'll be looking at proactive work. It won't be just about, "How do we keep kids in care?" It will be how we make sure that kids don't go into care because we're providing their families real services.

1730

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member from Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas has a question.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It is always a pleasure to sit in the House with the member from Hamilton Mountain, as it is a pleasure to spend time in our home town of Hamilton, visiting all the great spots that are there. So I appreciate listening to you and I appreciate being a colleague of yours.

You mentioned schedule 4. When this government came to power, there was all kinds of prideful boasting and self-congratulating, backslapping. It was quite obnoxious. But you know the proverb: Pride goeth before a fall. And certainly this government has fallen, because they promised to cut hydro by 12%—couldn't get it done. They promised to cut gas prices—couldn't get it done. And now they can't get their own budget out within their own timelines that they set, so now they have to change their own rules.

My question is, is it really that this government is not able to operate a budget, operate government, or in fact is this a political ploy where this budget is nothing but political promises—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you very much. The member for Hamilton Mountain will respond.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you to my colleague for sure. We've definitely had some great outings, particularly visiting Winterfest last week and doing all of that great work.

To me, it's a budget to be able to take them into the election, that we're not going to have the opportunity to put our eyes on, to do the work that we're elected to do—and also to save them more than \$20,000 and \$50,000, respectively, the amount, the fee, the fine that they would have to pay if they didn't get that budget out on time. They knew that it was important to get it as far off to the campaign as they could so they could run on it, but also saving their pocketbooks by not having to take that 10% out of their pockets to do the work. So here it is in legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): It looks like the government House leader has a question.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I'm enjoying this debate today because the NDP are really twisting themselves into circles, because it's killing them that they have to vote in favour of tax cuts. They speak against them, Mr. Speaker, but I've got to tell you, I am looking so forward to when we vote on this motion of confidence, this bill of confidence in the government, and every single member—the member who just asked the question from Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, when she stands in her place and votes and shows her confidence in this government by

voting in favour of this bill, that will be a day that I can hardly wait for. You know I'm going to have a lot of opportunities to showcase that level of support in this House, and I intend to do that.

My question for the member, though, is this. The 412 was contemplated and approved in 2013 when the NDP held the balance of power. It was always meant to be a toll. I wonder why, when they held the balance of power, they didn't bring a bill forward to this House to remove tolls on the 412 and 418 before they were even constructed.

Miss Monique Taylor: You know, Speaker, it's interesting that the member wants to talk about tolls and roads and highways. That's what he brought forward. Does he forget about the 407? Honestly, we are going to be paying to drive on that road for 100 years because they sold it off. But you know what I really want to comment on this? I just love how happy the government House leader is, that he's skipping, because they wanted—this is all about putting us in a position and he's angry now that we are supporting his bill. He is not happy. They've done everything—

Interjections.

Miss Monique Taylor: No, no, no. You're taking up my time.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Stop the clock. We're going to see if there is a legitimate point of order from the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: This is the absolute happiest that I've—

Interjections.

Hon. Paul Calandra: They actually believe in tax cuts. I'm a happy—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): That is not a point of order.

If you could wrap up, please.

Miss Monique Taylor: The government House leader is now abusing the rules of the Legislature, rules that he likes to change on a regular basis. Maybe he wants to build new standing orders so that he can have his way whenever he chooses. I'm not—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you very much.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Order, please.

The member for London West has a question.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I appreciated the comments from my colleague the member for Hamilton Mountain. I'm sure she will recall those four months in 2020 when people with disabilities, people on social assistance had to go through extensive bureaucratic loops to apply for a paltry \$100 benefit for individuals, \$200 for families. What do you think it says about a government that is willing to automatically process refunds for people who drive vehicles in the province when they made people with disabilities go through such barriers to get funding for COVID support?

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you to the member from London West, because she is absolutely right. People on OW and ODSP have been living in extreme poverty for many years under the Liberals, continued and made worse under the Conservatives. When we were under COVID, \$2,000 was the standard of living, and it's not even half of that for a person on Ontario Works or ODSP. It's absolutely shameful what this government did to people throughout COVID—having to beg, literally, and try to get through to their worker. I wonder if this—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Ten seconds.

Miss Monique Taylor: —is actually going to allow the name-and-shame of social services in the province to be able to happen. But it's okay because the government will be immune. They will not get in trouble for anything. They will just blame it on the service providers that they—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. We have time for another question—or a point of order. The government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Again, Mr. Speaker, let's remember that the opposition—all of them—allowed this bill to pass on division, without a vote. They allowed it to pass without going to committee. The NDP had the opportunity to stop tolls on the 412/418 before the highway was even built, when they held the balance of power. They refused to do that. The NDP are the ones who put tolls on the 407. It's the Conservatives who are removing tolls from all the highways. So only the NDP and the Liberals have ever tolled any highway.

But I'm wondering, Mr. Speaker—this is my question: How will it feel, to the member opposite, when you rise in your place and vote in support of this motion of confidence in the government? Really, it is to say that after four years you now support everything we've been doing. It is a wonderful opportunity, a moment to come together, and I can't be happier that, like oil and gas, now tax cuts, supporting a Conservative government—we've had a budget supported by them, and now we have this supported by them—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you very much. The member from Hamilton Mountain to respond.

Miss Monique Taylor: I've truly had a very interesting time being able to go through this bill to be able to pick it apart, to have my say, to be able to speak on behalf of my community. There are many issues, many things in this bill that I support, that my community supports, but there are many things that I've highlighted throughout this bill that are a problem and that will come back to the government. But I'm sure the government House leader will just be able to stand up and change the standing orders again to be able to suit himself and to be able to make legislation that he thinks will suit his needs and his ability to jump up in his seat whenever he so chooses.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I'll jump up in my seat now and turn to the member from Whitby to pose 20 minutes of debate.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Well, good afternoon, Speaker. For those who might be watching and joining us now, we're

debating Bill 84, Fewer Fees, Better Services Act. Making life more affordable for Ontarians is what we're doing.

I always look forward to the opportunity to speak about how our government continues to support hard-working families in the region of Durham, and am absolutely proud to be part of a government that is working hard to make Ontario the first choice for families and businesses ready to invest—again, making life more affordable for Ontarians.

Now, Ontario's spring 2022 red tape reduction package builds on successive semi-annual packages aimed at eliminating unnecessary burdens and opening the doors to economic activity. That's something that my local chamber of commerce and others that form the Durham Alliance in the region of Durham have been looking for, and we've delivered once again. We've listened carefully and we've delivered once again. These initiatives further demonstrate that our province is one of the best places in North America to raise a family, work and, yes, operate a business.

1740

We're coming out of the shadow of the pandemic. With the introduction of the proposed Fewer Fees, Better Services Act, the government continues its commitment to make life easier by reducing red tape for all Ontarians, Speaker. Overall, this comprehensive red tape reduction package builds on years of work to reduce the burden and lighten the load for hard-working families and businesses in my riding of Whitby and other parts of the region of Durham weighed down by the pandemic's demands.

There are a number of items in this legislation that I'll be touching on in the 17 minutes remaining that I look forward to addressing in the bill. But I want to start with the removal of the tolls from Highways 412 and 418 in the region of Durham, which would not have happened without the leadership of Premier Ford and the perseverance and support from Transportation Minister Caroline Mulroney and Finance Minister Peter Bethlenfalvy, the champion of all things Durham and the catalyst of the announcement on February 15.

I'll also address the ways this legislation helps build capacity so that our economy can rebound. That's something that the regional chair, John Henry, has been speaking about in the context of their recovery plan at the region of Durham.

Other aspects in this bill talk about customer service standards and the building Ontario initiative, the digital dealer program and, really importantly, the amendments to the Mining Act and the impact of that particular feature in the legislation to northern Ontario.

But, Speaker, let's go back to February 15 of this year when our government announced that it's restoring fairness and cutting costs for drivers and businesses in Durham by permanently removing the tolls on Highways 412 and 418, effective April 5, 2022. We've heard from the people of Durham loud and clear, and from other sectors across the region of Durham, municipal partners and business communities as well, that the tolls imposed on Highways 412 and 418 by the previous Del Duca-

Wynne government are wrong and unfair. That's why we're removing the tolls on these highways, so that people and businesses have more travel options and more hard-earned money in their pockets.

Steven Del Duca and the Liberals say they'll make life more affordable for Ontarians, but the reality is that after 15 years of a Liberal government in Ontario, the cost of living for hard-working families and businesses went sky-high—absolutely sky-high.

The tolls on Highways 412 and 418 were costly and unfair. While the previous Del Duca-Wynne governments were fine with that, we aren't. And when the previous Liberal government made a decision to toll these highways, the people of Durham suffered. It's comforting to know that, under this government, that has ended. Speaker, the tolls are done, they're gone, and getting rid of the tolls will bring real tangible relief to the people of Durham and surrounding regions. It will cut costs for hard-working families and provide more travel options for residents.

When Steven Del Duca was transportation minister under Kathleen Wynne, what did he do? He ignored the voices from the region of Durham—closed them out, didn't listen at all. For 15 long years, Ontarians had to deal with a government that said no to Durham region and the residents who live there and yes to their own agenda.

Here's some of what John Henry, the regional chair and chief executive officer of Durham region, whom you know, Speaker, had to say about the removal of the tolls on Highways 412 and 418. I had the pleasure of serving with John for 13 years when he was the mayor of Oshawa and then subsequently elected as the regional chair in the last municipal election. I represented Whitby, as you know.

"One of the region's focal points continues to be economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic." I referred to that when I was talking about the region's economic recovery plan and the linkages to what we're discussing today. John Henry went on to say, "A reliable and affordable road network that connects Durham region to the rest of the" greater Toronto-Hamilton area, "and Ontario, is a vital piece of a strong economy.

"That is why I'm thrilled to see the provincial government's announcement to remove tolls from Highways 412 and 418, effective April 5, 2022....

"The positive impact of removing these tolls will be immediate. It will promote economic activity supporting local businesses and residents that rely on these highways for the movement of people and goods....

"On behalf of the region of Durham, I thank the provincial government ... for their continued partnership in ensuring Durham region remains the best place to call home."

Here's some of what the Durham Region Association of Realtors had to say about this decision:

"Durham region is one of the fastest-growing parts of Ontario. Thousands of people are moving to our region every year because of the opportunities it presents to start a family, grow a business and join a community.

“The announcement by Premier Doug Ford on the removal of the tolls from Highways 412 and 418 is great news for Durham region. The tolls on these vital connecting roads are unfair to local homeowners, businesses and workers.

“Removing the tolls will save local commuters hundreds of dollars annually and help attract more jobs and opportunity to the region.”

The region of Durham, in the next two to three years, will have close to a million people living in the region, so I want to thank the region of Durham and the Durham Region Association of Realtors for their tireless advocacy and support in getting the tolls removed.

Speaker, for almost 15 years Liberal inaction on a wide range of issues led to a detrimental impact on the pocket-books of residents and businesses in Durham region and across Ontario. On this side of the House, we manifestly believe in making life more affordable for hard-working families and businesses. Let me state clearly to my constituents in Whitby and to residents and businesses in the region of Durham: Our government is delivering on our promise to get rid of these tolls. People need relief and they need that relief now.

Beyond this very welcome component of the bill, there are other ways the legislation provides relief to people and businesses of Durham region and Ontario, again making life more affordable. I know the opposition members believe that as well. They want to make life more affordable for their constituents as well. That’s why they’ve demonstrated their confidence in this legislation on second reading and third reading.

1750

Let there be no doubt—let there be no doubt—that since day one we’ve been absolutely relentless in finding ways to make it easier for people and businesses to interact with this government. This legislation is another example of that. It’s another example of listening carefully to the people whom we have the privilege of serving.

This legislation would give government the authority to create a new business service standard list. It would make Ontario a leader once again in North America for how easily and quickly a new business can be started. Our government would require all relevant ministries to develop service guarantees and commit to abide by them. The guarantees would range from how long it takes for paperwork to be processed after it’s been submitted to letting people know that the government has received their paperwork in the first place.

Now, in my discussions with my business sector and some of the communities that adjoin my riding, Speaker, this is one of the aspects that they felt needed to be strengthened. Once again, we listened: It’s in the legislation. This would help hold the government, both ours and future governments—because, of course, we’re forward-thinking—to account. The new standards would also require ministries with service guarantees to track how often they failed to meet those guarantees. It would require that those results are posted publicly, as they should be, so that the people of Ontario will know where their government needs to improve.

Another exciting component of this legislation is the single window for business, an online portal that would make it easier for businesses to access the information and services they need to get up and running, create jobs and, yes, grow. It would allow entrepreneurs and businesses to create a central hub, not unlike what is situated in the downtown of Whitby, 1855. It’s a facility that originated with the town of Whitby, our community marketing services department and several entrepreneurs led by David Lahey at Predictive Success, taking thousands of pages of content and making them easier to access through a single entry point. Those wanting to start a business wouldn’t have to sift through thousands of pages of content across different websites. It’s a great idea, and I want to commend Ontario’s Associate Minister of Digital Government and his team for their hard work in bringing it forward. Simply put, Speaker, it would act as the new front door for entrepreneurs looking to start a business.

This legislation also contains the Building Ontario Businesses Initiative Act, which would provide companies in Ontario and Canada with greater business opportunities through public procurements. It would also help hard-working businesses in my riding and other parts of the region sell more goods and services and create jobs, because we know that small businesses, whether in Whitby or in the other parts of the region of Durham, are the job creators. Once again, we’re empowering them to create jobs in our local community. That’s why I know the members of the opposition have confidence in this legislation—because it’s going to create more jobs in their respective ridings.

Our businesses are critical in ensuring the future health of our provincial supply chain. In the COVID-19 recovery phase, we’re focused on protecting the progress that’s been made and building up Ontario businesses to get our economy back on track. Once again, Speaker, that’s not unlike the objectives of the region of Durham’s economic recovery action plan, led by Regional Chair John Henry and the members of his council.

Moving forward, Ontario is delivering on this plan to make government services easier and more accessible during the pandemic and beyond, by piloting a program that allows eligible car dealerships to register new vehicles online and issue permits and plates.

I think I have about three minutes and 54 seconds, so I’m going to move to another part of my remarks.

Speaker, once again, I am pleased to support this critical piece of legislation. You were in the chair the day I spoke on second reading. I’m proud to be part of a government that’s working to protect people and businesses in Ontario. I know that we all subscribe to that notion. Why wouldn’t we? We want our individual ridings to succeed as they come out of COVID. The pillars to success are in this piece of legislation, so now I understand why the members of the opposition support it.

The actions our government has taken to date have resulted in almost \$400 million in net annual savings to businesses and, if passed, this act will further support businesses and entrepreneurs like those resident in 1855 in

my riding, ease the financial burden on hard-working families across Ontario, and remove overly complex processes that only serve to frustrate and thwart investment.

Speaker, measures in our government's red tape packages have allowed us to reduce needless regulatory compliance requirements by 6.5% overall, and we're approaching our goal of achieving \$373 million in net annual savings.

But what's clear is that we must continue the work of making it easier for people and businesses in Whitby, the region of Durham and other parts of this great province to work and conduct business. That takes a collective effort, intent and purpose, and our government has that intent and purpose. We're going to continue to demonstrate that through our ongoing work to modernize our regulatory system and make Ontario ripe for future investments and economic prosperity. We're making regions like the region of Durham and other parts of this great province an even better and easier place to expand and thrive, making life affordable for hard-working families in this province. Through the continuation of this work, we're supporting people and businesses all across this province.

Once again, I am proud to be part of a government that works tirelessly to make Ontario the first choice for families and businesses ready to invest. Together we're making life more affordable for Ontarians with the leadership of Premier Ford and the members of our cabinet. Join us in supporting this legislation tomorrow and help us to move forward once again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Normally at this time we would have 10 minutes of questions and responses, but we would never get through the first question, I don't believe. So, we're going to turn to private members' public business.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

VETERANS

ANCIENS COMBATTANTS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I'm going to recognize the member from St. Catharines, who will move her motion.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Speaker, I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Ford government should immediately end the automatic deduction of federal disability award payments from Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program benefits received by injured veterans.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Pursuant to standing order 101, the member will have 12 minutes to state her presentation. I turn back to the member from St. Catharines.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: It is always an honour to stand in the House on behalf of the great residents of St. Catharines.

I would like to take a moment to clarify that when we are going to be speaking about the federal disability award payment, it is related to any disability benefits for veterans, which recently has been called "pain and suffering" compensation. These payments in all of their forms are clawed back from our provincial support programs, which I will elaborate on later.

1800

I will admit that as a private member you have to be selective in determining what type of policy you bring forward to discuss in this chamber. I say this because in my riding of St. Catharines there are many pressing issues that need solutions: affordable housing, hospital funding, senior dignity issues, young families who struggle to get ahead right now, social assistance programs that are in dire need for review. These are just a few that I can mention. However, if this issue that was presented before the House in November were not brought back, it is my opinion that no one would have revisited it.

The kernel of this motion began in November when I asked why there were Ontario clawbacks on benefits from injured veterans when they are given federal disability awards or pain-and-suffering compensation. I asked a very straightforward question to get justice for veterans with disabilities. We heard no answers. In fact, the member from Ottawa West-Nepean used that moment to talk about the right to wear poppies and how the Ontario government is protecting those rights, while ignoring the rights of those who gave up the most: injured veterans. That took me back a little bit, Speaker.

This past October, the Legion Ontario Command penned a letter to Minister Tibollo. I actually sent it by page over to the Premier. In that letter, President Garry Pond said, "We have numerous veterans who are fearful of even applying for compensation knowing the Ontario provincial government will claw back their basic needs and shelter until the disability award is spent." The Legion says some veterans have literally ended up homeless after they unknowingly had their shelter allowance clawed back by this Conservative government. This absolutely must stop.

The Canadian Legion has asked the government to solve an unfair policy that literally results in injured veterans becoming homeless because the Premier is clawing back money from their pockets. This is when I knew that I had to bring this matter back to the floor for debate. Veterans are not only our military men and women, but they are also police, paramedics and firefighters. Veterans have served this country with valour and honour. If they receive a disability award from Veterans Affairs Canada, this government has had it clawed back. This is actually an act of shamefulness.

I bring this forward for predominantly three reasons. The first is that I represent a community full of veterans. In fact, my son was included in that group. In St. Catharines we have four Legions and they are active and engaged participants in Niagara. I am a member of Merritton Legion, branch 138, and regularly attend their events, and always attend their memorial services across

St. Catharines. A few reasons that this issue is deep and personal to me.

The second is simple: It is just flat out the right thing to do. Put politics aside and let's do the right thing right here. If an individual is injured through the act of duty and they need support through our provincial disability support system, we should not be punishing them. Their loss of an arm or their hearing should not be considered "income" that would require deductions. I should not be required to litigate this fact today, because this is just common sense. I have heard of too many examples where injured veterans do not even come forward to claim a disability award because they are worried what that will mean for their provincial disability supports, a program that we all know takes too, too long to get on. It is bad enough that they are ill; now they're fearful as well.

My question is, why can we not as a province immediately end this unfair clawback of benefits that our veterans with disabilities rightfully should be getting? This is an award that comes from the federal government, and if an Ontario veteran is on a disability support program, the Ontario government claws it back until it's completely gone. This is federal money clawed back by the provincial government. How does this help our injured veterans in Ontario?

The third reason is a little bit more complicated. This government spent last November on a victory lap for modernizing the Soldiers' Aid Commission. That is a small positive step forward. And I recall when I first got elected, alongside with Ontario Dominion and so many veteran advocacy groups, after decades of neglect, we had this program modernized. The year before it was fixed, I brought it up during question period. I did it with the same zeal and passion that I was asking a question about these clawbacks this past November on this matter. I think that passion makes a difference, Speaker; pressure and amplification can definitely lead to change. It is the job of the opposition to work alongside with the government to identify and fix gaps that we all can see together. It happened with the Soldiers' Aid Commission, and I am hopeful, for many injured veterans in Ontario, it can happen for them as well.

I want to spend the next part of my time providing a face to the problem at hand. When we create policy it is often in the vacuum of this chamber, and we can sometimes sideline real people for the views of stakeholders. The cost of that circumstance is we miss the point and the cost of the decisions we are making.

I want to bring your attention to Eunice Waddell. Eunice is a nurse by profession. She started her career with the reserves from 1972 to 1979, and the regular forces from 1980 to 1982. In her almost 10 years with the Canadian Armed Forces, she was a field nurse. Speaker, I think everyone in this chamber will agree her service has made our country so proud. At 67 years old, though—four decades later—she is only now comfortable to discuss the circumstances of her service and what she personally lost. Ms. Waddell had substantial hearing loss due to her service, but never pursued the disability award or pain-

and-suffering compensation. Do you know why? She was worried that this would compromise the support she had been receiving through the Ontario Disability Support Program. She knew it would result in clawbacks or a suspension of her support, and since it had taken so long for her to get on the program—as everyone knows, the ODSP program is painfully broken—she did not want to risk it. So she stayed quiet. She never came forward.

This is an unfortunate reality of too many of our servicemen and -women in Ms. Waddell's situation: injured and fearful. So why, at 67, is Ms. Waddell willing to tell her story and come forward? It is because she is 67 and her assistance is now CPP. In other words, Speaker, she no longer needs the support of this province. Ms. Waddell has offered context to the gap in our system that never should have existed in the first place; however, it is scary to know how many veterans wouldn't come forward with these issues because they're fearful and they're proud.

When I spoke to the Ontario Command, I was told of several stories of evictions that occurred because an injured veteran received compensation for their injury, and the Ontario social assistance programs clawed it back without telling them. This happens if they receive a shelter allowance from Ontario Works—and that money goes directly to the landlord. The end result is another veteran that is homeless, Speaker.

Can this motion work as a commitment for this government to recognize the problem and acknowledge it needs to be fixed? No more finding small loopholes to refuse to support veterans. No more opportunities to pivot to talk about another issue for veterans. No more pinning medals on your chest that were never earned. We have a gap here and we can fix it. Let's today commit to looking at closing this gap. Stop these clawbacks for injured veterans today.

Through conversations with Scott Maxwell from Wounded Warriors Canada, an organization that helps injured veterans, he echoed that this has been an ongoing issue for quite some time. It is quite clear that this should not be a partisan issue. We have gaps here and we can fix it. Let's do it today. Whether you are calling it a disability award or pain-and-suffering, together—both sides of this House—we can make this right today. Do you really want to be a government that is known for the continued undercutting of supports for injured veterans? I think not. Ontario does not need to take federal money from veterans who deserve compensation.

1810

I hope this matter will transcend party politics and we can agree and commit to closing this gap for injured veterans right across Ontario. I am asking this government to do the right thing: End the clawbacks, please. Do not put another injured veteran on the streets and make them homeless. They deserve more. Our Ontario government and this side of the House feel that they deserve more. And please do not come back in your arguments and tell me that this is a partisan issue. This is something that we all should do together and make it right.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I'll invite other members to join the debate.

Ms. Doly Begum: I thank the member from St. Catharines for bringing forward motion 13. She has been a passionate advocate for her community and a fantastic critic for veterans affairs.

Speaker, I rise on behalf of the people of Scarborough Southwest today, especially for the elders, those who fought for our country, to speak to motion 13: ending clawbacks for injured veterans. It is unconscionable to have a system which continues to claw back benefits that injured veterans, people who have put their lives on the line for our country, are entitled to receive. This motion is to address a policy failure, a significant gap between service-related injury compensation frameworks that continue to make these individuals more vulnerable in our society.

The federal Critical Injury Benefit is a program within the federal disability benefit program. It is a one-time, tax-free, lump-sum award that is provided to veterans to compensate for the immediate impact of severe and traumatic service-related injuries or illnesses.

Now, while the Critical Injury Benefit is not taxed by the federal government, receipt of this benefit for veterans in Ontario can have significant financial implications. In Ontario, this benefit is treated as income when determining ODSP eligibility, a flaw we have within our system for many on OW and ODSP, and can significantly reduce the amount that a veteran is eligible to receive monthly. Speaker, this bill will end the automatic deductions for disability award payments for these veterans receiving OW or ODSP. For those receiving the federal Critical Injury Benefit, treating a single lump-sum payment as income and the subsequent deduction they face for being injured and requiring further assistance on OW or ODSP is simply unjust. It's punishing.

Speaker, these men and women have given so much to serve this country, and this is what we do in return? This clawback is unjust, especially as we face rising inflation and increased economic hardships across all of society.

In the spirit of today's bill, we must also acknowledge that veterans, after their service, continue to give back. Their experience and wisdom benefit our communities. From becoming community leaders to sharing their incredible stories at the Legion halls, the value that their lived experiences bring is immeasurable.

I have risen in this chamber on many occasions to speak about veterans in Scarborough Southwest, like Mr. Fred Arsenault who recently passed, who continued to touch people's hearts and work for the community as a centenarian. At the same time, I have also spoken about Mr. Ralph Musgrave, who was tragically failed by our system, spending his last days in the most cruel conditions in social housing. We can and must do better for veterans seeking social assistance.

It is obvious, speaking to anyone on ODSP or OW, that the challenges they face can be enormous. My office regularly hears the difficulties that these clawback mechanisms create, the harm, the uncertainty that they cause.

Although those of us sitting in this chamber may be able to deal with a \$100 or \$500 unexpected cost, for the people in our community surviving on social benefits this is a matter of choosing between food or medicine or paying their rent. We regularly hear the heart-wrenching choices that so many in Scarborough Southwest are forced to make.

Today I'm calling on all members of the House to do the right thing: to do better for our veterans and end the systemic denial of benefits for veterans. We have a choice and we have a responsibility to do justice for those we represent in our communities, especially the most vulnerable, so that no one slips through the cracks and falls further behind. Let's fix the systemic flaw. Let's get this done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I'm standing here today to voice my support for this motion. To begin with, I just want to say that ODSP rates are shamefully low in this province, and I've been raising that point many times. I hear, actually, from constituents on a daily basis that the allocation that they have to rely on doesn't allow them to live with the independence they aspire to.

Je suis certaine que le gouvernement reçoit également plusieurs témoignages de la part de concitoyens ontariens qui doivent dépendre de la maigre allocation du Programme ontarien de soutien aux personnes handicapées pour subvenir à leurs besoins de base. Le gouvernement ne peut pas croire qu'une personne puisse vivre décemment avec 700 \$ par mois parce qu'elle est handicapée et ne peut pas travailler.

Chaque Ontarien mérite de pouvoir vivre avec dignité. Un gouvernement responsable doit reconnaître qu'en fonction des coûts de la vie, les prestations du programme ontarien constituent une barrière financière à l'autonomie et à la dignité des personnes. La pandémie a mis en lumière plusieurs aspects du programme qui mériteraient d'être révisés. De plus, on me rapporte constamment que le processus de demande est fastidieux et devrait être rendu plus accessible, plus simple et plus moderne.

It is more than time to review how these services can be made more accessible and how benefits can be brought up to a livable standard. Everyone receiving ODSP deserves more than the shameful \$700 a month that this government expects them to live on.

Therefore, I support the motion brought forward today for this government to immediately end the automatic deduction of federal disability award payments from Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program benefits received by injured veterans, because I'm going to assume these clawbacks are a mistake. The alternative is believing that the members opposite think that veterans should not be receiving support from the country they had risked their lives and their well-being for. Veterans deserve better than the bureaucratic injustice imposed by this policy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: I'd like to thank my colleague from St. Catharines for this motion. I believe it's important on several levels. Her passion about advocating for veterans and for people who are disadvantaged and the poor has been an inspiration. I really appreciate that work and I'm proud to call her my friend.

How does one get on OW or ODSP? There's an application process that makes you eligible. Our rates in Ontario for OW are shameful to say the least—no one can live on them. People who cannot work because of disability, because they're on the Ontario Disability Support Program, they go through a process and that provides them a bit of a safety net. It provides them, maybe, geared-to-income housing if they're lucky enough to get it, because that's not an easy process in most places. It allows for some, perhaps, help with their groceries if they have a special diet. It might help them with a very meager income. Most of those folks end up having to go to food banks, they don't buy new clothes, they cannot afford a car. They live a very, very impoverished lifestyle. They do that because they are disabled and unable to work.

When a veteran gets an award, they also have to be eligible for that award. There's a process. They have to make an application. Their circumstances are weighed. Everything in the federal government is very due-diligence. If they actually become eligible for that award, then that is there for a lifetime to assist them to make their life a little bit better.

1820

When we claw back and take away the safety net of a disabled veteran, what we do is we put them in a precarious situation. We don't allow them to improve their life at all. That veteran who gave a substantial sacrifice to our country is now at a point where we want to keep them in the depths of poverty. We don't want to allow them any kind of comfort or any kind of safety net or any kind of quality of life, which is what that benefit is supposed to provide for them. And so, Speaker, this motion is very important, because I am sure it doesn't apply to many people, but to those veterans that it applies to, it is very important.

We have an opportunity today to actually right a wrong, to actually allow these veterans to live a quality life, that they have some semblance of a decent life for the rest of their time, rather than keeping them in the depths of poverty that ODSP keeps people in. We could probably talk about other clawbacks that ODSP does, and I look forward to the day that we can actually fix that very broken system. I encourage the members on the other side of the House to really contemplate supporting this very important motion so that we can make the quality of life for those veterans better.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I'm pleased to rise today to speak on the bill brought forward by the member for St. Catharines. I'd like to begin, Speaker, by expressing my thanks to the member opposite's son for his service. I know that her experience as a family member really drives

her passion in advocating for veterans. It's something that I think all of us in this House appreciate, and appreciate her continued advocacy.

I'd also like to thank all of the brave men and women in our armed forces for their tireless work. Beyond their role in keeping Canadians safe abroad, I've also seen firsthand how they can help keep our own communities safe. In 2019, during the devastating flooding along the Ottawa River, men and women from our armed forces were there in my riding to help residents in need. It was so, so appreciated at that time, so thank you to each and every one of them.

Speaker, I think it is fair to say that there is broad agreement on both sides of this House that Ontario's veterans have made tremendous sacrifices to make our country and province what they are today and that we need to be there for our veterans when they need us. Our government takes that to heart, and we know the importance of remembering and supporting Ontario's veterans, not just on Remembrance Day but every day. We have worked across government, across ministries to deliver on our commitment to veterans.

Let me share some of these measures. Our government unveiled a memorial to pay tribute to the Canadian Armed Forces personnel who served in Afghanistan. Our government has launched innovative projects like Elevate Plus Military to help members of the Canadian Armed Forces transition to civilian life and leverage their talents by teaching soft skills, technical skills and providing paid job placements. We have eliminated property taxes for Royal Canadian Legion halls and created an online information resource to help communities hold accessible Remembrance Day and memorial ceremonies, particularly over the past two years through COVID. Our government established the Ontario Military Families Relocation Hotline, a one-stop shop that connects Canadian Armed Forces personnel with useful information to support them and their families as they continue to serve.

I am also pleased to be able to remind this House that the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries announced an investment of \$83 million to assist non-profit organizations, including Royal Canadian Legion branches, recover from COVID-19. I was pleased to be able to join the minister at the Barrhaven Legion, just south of my riding, to share that good news. I'm proud to be a member of a government that supports our veterans and puts our words into actions.

While these are initiatives that we can all be proud of, it is important to note that veterans' benefits are the responsibility of the federal government through Veterans Affairs Canada. There are at least 14 different types of payments that can be made to veterans through Veterans Affairs Canada.

With regard to the issue being debated here today, I want to provide clarity on a few points. As it relates to the Ontario Disability Support Program, ODSP, awards for pain and suffering do not count against ODSP; disability-related items do not count against ODSP; and funding received through the Soldiers' Aid Commission is

exempt—to name just a few income supports for veterans that are exempt as income from ODSP. For further clarity, a disability award—which was repealed in 2019, though there are still people who receive it and the additional monthly amount, a monthly supplement that may be made to recipients—and its successor since 2019, pain-and-suffering compensation, are also exempt as income under the ODSP. So are the additional pain-and-suffering compensation, the exceptional incapacity allowance and the critical injury benefit. The clothing allowance from Veterans Affairs for clothing required due to a disability or injury is not treated as income. Neither is the attendance allowance or the funding under the Veterans Independence Program for things like housekeeping, meal preparation, personal care and support services.

ODSP is not a one-size-fits-all program and in order to provide the most support for those in need, the program is designed to take the means of a recipient into account. I don't imagine the members opposite are suggesting that this social assistance program should no longer be means-tested, and I would welcome clarity from across the aisle on which funding streams from the federal government they are referring to in this motion.

On the broader issue of supports for veterans, I welcome the suggestion that the federal government provide greater financial supports for our veterans. In a country as prosperous as Canada, it's shameful that any veteran be living in poverty. I hope that all of us in this House can take up that cause.

Here in Ontario, we go a step further than advocacy. Unlike other provinces, Ontario has a proud history of providing financial support to our veterans, going above and beyond the federal government's benefits to provide supports through the Soldiers' Aid Commission. The Soldiers' Aid Commission provides financial assistance for veterans and their families for health-related items, like hearing aids, glasses, prescription and dental needs; home-related items, like repairs, moving costs, furniture replacement, repair of a roof and furnace; specialized equipment, like assistive devices, wheelchairs and prosthetics; personal items, like clothing, care products; and, most recently, employment-related supports, like work clothes and such as workbooks and short-term courses to improve employability. The Soldiers' Aid Commission is the only provincially funded financial assistance program in Canada specifically for veterans.

Knowing the importance of this work, our government expanded the Soldiers' Aid Commission's mandate to apply to all Ontario's veterans. The expansion of the commission's mandate that our government undertook was the first meaningful change in decades. Previously, the commission's financial assistance was constrained to a very limited group of former servicemen and servicewomen. While we will never forget the bravery or sacrifice of veterans of the two world wars and of the conflict in Korea, we knew it was time we honour and support a new generation of servicemen and -women.

I'm pleased to add that to support this expanded mandate, our government increased that commission's

funding by about 600% to \$1.55 million each year. On top of that reform, we invested \$529,000 through the True Patriot Love Foundation to deliver a broad range of mental health supports to veterans returning to civilian life.

Our government has been steadfast in our commitment to Ontarians who have served in uniform; we have had veterans' backs since day one and I've listed quite a few of the measures we've taken to support veterans, including many new steps taken just over the past four years.

1830

We're going to continue to remember and honour the sacrifices made by veterans, and we're going to continue to take concrete steps to support our veterans. In this regard, I am pleased to join my friend the member for St. Catharines in supporting this motion and reaffirming this Legislature's ongoing commitment to supporting our veterans.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's an honour to rise and speak in favour of the motion from the member from St. Catharines. I appreciate the member bringing forward this motion.

People living on Ontario Works and Ontario disability support live far below the poverty line. It's virtually impossible for anyone in this province to live on \$733 per month. You can't even rent an apartment for that, for somebody on Ontario Works. It's a little better if you're on Ontario disability support, but you oftentimes have higher expenses. It's still impossible to live on \$1,169. Then, if someone is fortunate enough to receive a one-time veterans' disability award payment, the government claws it back.

I want to quote Garry Pond, the provincial president of the Legion Ontario Command, who wrote the Ford government and said, "We have numerous veterans who are fearful of even applying for compensation knowing the Ontario provincial government will claw back their basic needs and shelter until the disability award is spent. This requires the veteran to reapply and prove they once again have no way to provide basic needs and shelter."

I'm pleased to hear the members opposite saying they'll vote for this motion, because that's a practice that needs to end. No veteran in this province should be denied a place to live or the ability to put food on the table. It's shameful. Ontarians deserve better, veterans deserve better, so I'm hoping that there will be unanimous support for this motion.

While we're debating the topic, I urge the government to double Ontario disability support payments so, at the very least, people with disabilities can live above the low-income poverty line. And let's unite as all parties in this House to put pressure on the federal government to implement the federal disability benefit that the Liberal government promised in the last campaign.

Let's be clear: No one in a province like Ontario should live so far below the poverty line as people with disabilities do. Let's unite to fix this problem now.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Harris: I'd like to commend the member from St. Catharines for bringing this bill forward. I know she is a proud mother of a son who serves in the Canadian Forces, and I want to thank him for his service.

I want to talk about a little bit of a bigger issue here. With an election on the rise, we can see why the NDP is trying to change the channel on their dismal record on veterans' issues. It's telling that, this past November, the Leader of the Opposition found the chance to talk about veterans in the Legislature for just the fourth time in this Parliament. And let's not forget that it was a New Democratic candidate for Mississauga Centre in the last election who referred to Remembrance Day and wearing a poppy as "collective brainwashing" and an "annual ritual of war glorification." The same candidate complained about veterans being acknowledged at Maple Leafs' games, Argos' games and Blue Jays' games. In fact, she called it "military propaganda." I'm surprised to hear members of this House criticizing the government's record when they were sharing a platform with the NDP candidate who put quotation marks around the word "heroes" when talking about our veterans just a few short years ago.

After all those shameful comments from the NDP's candidate, I'll remind this House of how the Leader of the Opposition reacted. The Toronto Star headline—I can't believe I'm quoting from the Toronto Star here. A Toronto Star headline from May 20, 2018, said it all. It read, "Andrea Horwath Defends NDP Candidate over Remembrance Day Comments." One could be forgiven for thinking the NDP record is anti-veteran—no wonder they want to rebrand it.

The NDP may have short memories and have conveniently forgotten their record, but veterans and Ontarians haven't. What the NDP have also forgotten is that Ontario is the only province in Canada that funds a direct financial support for veterans, Mr. Speaker. They've forgotten that our government supported that expanded mandate by increasing funding by 600% to that program. That's on top of real support from across government that is getting veterans back to finding well-paid, meaningful employment, helping Legion branches across the province by removing property tax and honouring the service and sacrifice of Ontario's men and women in uniform.

The Premier and our government will continue to stand behind every man and woman who has served in the armed forces. On this side of the House, we know that the men and women who have served our country and defended our way of life are actual heroes, and we support our veterans everyday, not just on Remembrance Day or during campaigns.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to rise in this House, and this afternoon especially for this motion, to ensure that if veterans get a federal benefit, that it isn't clawed back by our ODSP system.

This last week, we have all seen what our veterans have gone through. We're seeing it in real time now in Ukraine.

We have all stood and talked about defending freedom, and how important that is. A big part of defending freedom is although I may not agree with what you say, defending the right to say it, and that is a big part of defending freedom.

We all stand with Ukraine, but we all need to stand as well with the people who answered the call in the past. The people who answered the call in world wars, in Korea, in Afghanistan, in peacekeeping, in floods, in tornados—they all answered the call and they all, almost to a person, have been damaged by answering that call and only now are we learning how extensive that damage can be. In many cases, that call leads, in later life, to the inability to function easily in our society. And here we are, the member from Kitchener–Conestoga taking partisan shots about an issue that isn't partisan at all.

We need every veteran in Ontario to be able to live in dignity because they served us with dignity, did things that many of us don't have the heart to do. I am encouraged that the government is willing to support this motion. We need to do more than support this motion. We need to fix this issue. If it's only happening to one, we still need to fix this issue because that one did do something to save us all.

I encourage everyone to support this motion, put down our partisan blades and do what we need to do—do our part to serve the people who served us.

1840

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member from St. Catharines will have two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I want to thank all members who have spoken in favour of this motion. I think it really goes a long way to say that when we work on both sides of the House together, we can get things done that are critical for people within our communities, our veterans who fought for our freedom, for our country—it's new veterans and old veterans we are taking into consideration here.

I do want to step back a little bit and comment on a few of the member from Kitchener–Conestoga's comments. I have to remind the government side that this is a non-partisan issue. I want to let them know that I brought it forward because, yes, I'm a proud mother of a member of the armed forces. I'm also a granddaughter and a daughter—I come from a large military family, Speaker. But most of all, I want to let the government side know that I stand here, and I don't want to get pats on the back to say that I was a member of the opposition that brought this motion forward so that we can make sure that veterans who live on ODSP can survive and they won't end up on the streets. I don't want that pat on the back, and I don't want a pat on the back that I brought the Soldiers' Aid Commission back for the government to review and to make sure.

But I do want to remind the government side that our Leader of the Opposition created a position for a critic to be mindful and to bring to the government's attention how this House, may it be the governments in the past or the governments of today, how we treat our veterans. We have to treat them with pride, dignity and respect.

I'd like to end it at that. Thank you, Speaker, for the time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The time for private members' public business has expired.

Mrs. Stephens has moved notice of motion number 13. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried. The motion is carried. Congratulations.

Motion agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Pursuant to standing order 36, it is deemed that the motion for this House to adjourn has been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

IMMUNISATION CONTRE LA COVID-19

COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): However, colleagues, earlier today the member from Ottawa South gave notice of dissatisfaction with a question he posed to the Minister of Health. The member from Ottawa South will have five minutes to debate the question, and the minister's parliamentary assistant is here to respond.

First, we turn to the member from Ottawa South.

M. John Fraser: Aujourd'hui en Ontario, le gouvernement a levé plusieurs de ses mesures de sécurité liées à la COVID-19 : plus de limites de capacité, plus de preuve de vaccination et plus de distanciation physique.

Bien que nous soyons tous heureux de voir que les choses s'améliorent, l'une des choses les plus importantes que nous ayons apprises à propos de la COVID-19, c'est qu'elle peut nous surprendre. Nous devons donc être prêts si et quand elle essaie de nous surprendre.

Les deux outils les plus importants que nous devons avoir sous la main sont les masques et la vaccination. L'Ontario est presque dernier pour la vaccination des enfants de cinq à 11 ans—loin de notre objectif. Nous sommes, à ce point, arrêtés.

Il y a deux semaines, le premier ministre a dit ceci à propos des vaccins COVID : « Peu importe que vous receviez une dose ou 10 doses, vous pouvez toujours contracter la COVID. » Ce n'est pas vrai. Les vaccins contre la COVID offrent une protection contre les maladies graves, l'hospitalisation et l'admission aux soins intensifs, et bien qu'ils n'éliminent pas la transmission, ils la réduisent.

Il ne faut pas grand-chose pour saper le travail de milliers et de milliers de travailleurs de la santé de première ligne. Le premier ministre l'a fait dans une seule phrase—une seule phrase.

Les Ontariens ont besoin d'un premier ministre qui se lève chaque matin et dit : « Que puis-je faire pour augmenter les taux de vaccination des enfants? » Pas un premier ministre qui jette le doute sur les vaccins.

L'Ontario est presque dernier pour la vaccination des enfants de cinq à 11 ans. L'Ontario a besoin d'un plan pour être numéro un au Canada.

Ontario is at the back of the pack—eighth place—for vaccinating five-to-11-year-olds, 58%; less than 30% on a second dose. It's not good enough. We have to do better. We all know that.

The government needs a plan. The government needs a plan to help parents, to give them information, to give them access so they can make informed decisions. They have to make sure there's a plan to have access. The government has to participate with public health units to do that. Don't leave it all up to them. There should be somebody on the other side whose job every day, if it's not the Premier's, is to say, "What are we doing to get these vaccines out and talk to parents and talk up vaccines," not cast doubt on them.

Ontarians have stepped up in record numbers to get vaccines, and that's great. We can all be proud of that. But right now, there's a ton of work to do with five-to-11-year-olds, a ton of work to do with their parents. And it should be job one. They're our kids.

Here's the thing we know about COVID: It comes in waves. Every wave after the second wave, or maybe even the second wave, was the last wave, and we know it wasn't. There was Delta—"We're done; we're good"—and there was Omicron. So we know we can get surprises. We know if we're not ready what's going to happen. What happens when we're not ready? Longer lockdowns, more public health restrictions. What's the thing we can do? Vaccines: vaccines for kids, vaccines to protect our kids; promoting booster shots, too, for adults. We know that. That's one of our most important weapons against COVID—masks, too.

More about that later, another day. Anyway, thank you very much, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I would caution the member that in the future, when making reference to what somebody said as not true, you're straying into the land, that minefield, of unparliamentary language, and it's someplace that we all want to stay away from. So you're cautioned on that.

The member for Eglinton–Lawrence is the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Health. She will have up to five minutes to respond.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Mr. Speaker, our government's top priority has always been protecting the health and safety of Ontarians, and that has certainly been true throughout the pandemic. Since the beginning of the pandemic, this approach has guided all of our actions and it continues to do so today as we gradually and safely reopen.

As the minister stated in her original response to the member this morning, Ontario has administered over 31 million vaccine doses to date. This is more than any other province or territory. An amazing 92.4% of all Ontarians aged 12 and over are benefiting from the protection of a first dose of the vaccine and more than 90.1% are fully immunized. Those are extraordinary numbers.

Vaccines were only made available to children ages five to 11 in Canada on November 22, not too long ago. Of course, we know that our work is not yet complete, and

that is why we have had in place our last-mile strategy for some time. It is still active and still continuing to produce the results that have made Ontario a world-leading jurisdiction in COVID vaccination rates.

Working with our partners in local public health units, we have identified and created key partnerships with school boards, youth groups and organizations, children's hospitals, the children's aid society and many more to help facilitate a greater uptake of a COVID-19 vaccine among five-to-11-year-olds. That includes a hotline for parents to be able to call the Hospital for Sick Children to be counselled on getting a vaccine for five-to-11-year-olds to have all of their questions answered. These are extraordinary resources being brought to bear.

We're continuing to work with system partners and stakeholders to ensure that information and tools are available to help Ontarians with their decisions regarding vaccinations. This includes our public health units, who we are working with all the time, employing a number of strategies to grant access to vaccine appointments to any youth who wants one while ensuring youth and their families are informed and feel safe when receiving their vaccine.

I should just pause to mention that I myself went to a set-up for giving vaccinations to five-to-11-year-old children at the Toronto Zoo. I know that the minister and the Premier himself also went to that vaccination set-up at the Metro zoo, which is another innovative way to get kids to come to get something where they feel comfortable and get vaccinations. We're using all kinds of ideas like that.

High rates of vaccination against COVID-19 is why we are able to be taking the big step forward that we took today on our path to reopening. We strongly encourage all people who remain unvaccinated to embrace the opportunity to get their COVID-19 vaccine, and we're certainly

pleased that so many have taken up the opportunity to do so. That includes the youngest people, who are also rolling up their sleeves to get vaccinated.

Premier Ford and our government recognized early on that immunization is the most important tool that we have to ensure that Ontarians stay safe and healthy and not suffer from severe illness or death from a COVID-19 infection, and ultimately that COVID-19 does not overwhelm our hospitals or intensive care units, resulting in the need for other public health restrictions.

It's true that with Omicron people who are vaccinated are much more likely than they had been in earlier waves to be able still to contract COVID-19, but it is also true—and both can be true at the same time—that the vaccines still remain the best defence against severe illness, hospitalization or death.

In the face of Omicron, we rapidly expanded eligibility for boosters and had an all-hands-on-deck approach recently to immunization to ensure that our residents were as protected as they could be. Recently we expanded booster eligibility to all Ontarians aged 11 to 17.

Quite simply, Ontario's record on vaccination speaks for itself. We will continue to provide every opportunity for every Ontarian to get their shot and we will continue to encourage them to do so, so that we can all finally live again, even if COVID-19 is still in our midst.

Mr. John Fraser: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): A point of order? There are no points of order in the late show, I'm told. Thank you. Take your seat.

There being no further business to debate this evening, I deem the earlier motion to adjourn to be carried.

This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow, March 2.

The House adjourned at 1854.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Anand, Deepak (PC)	Mississauga—Malton	
Andrew, Jill (NDP)	Toronto—St. Paul's	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London—Fanshawe	
Arnott, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (PC)	Wellington—Halton Hills	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Arthur, Ian (NDP)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Baber, Roman (IND)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Babikian, Aris (PC)	Scarborough—Agincourt	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia—Lambton	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
Begum, Doly (NDP)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bell, Jessica (NDP)	University—Rosedale	
Berns-McGown, Rima (NDP)	Beaches—East York / Beaches—East York	
Bethlenfalvy, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (PC)	Pickering—Uxbridge	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins	
Blais, Stephen (LIB)	Orléans	
Bouma, Will (PC)	Brantford—Brant	
Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
Burch, Jeff (NDP)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	
Calandra, Hon. / L'hon. Paul (PC)	Markham—Stouffville	Minister of Legislative Affairs / Ministre des Affaires législatives Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough North / Scarborough-Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Stan (PC)	Willowdale	Associate Minister of Transportation (GTA) / Ministre associé des Transports (RGT)
Clark, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby	
Collard, Lucille (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	
Crawford, Stephen (PC)	Oakville	
Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	Attorney General / Procureur général
Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
Elliott, Hon. / L'hon. Christine (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé
Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)	Nipissing	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce
Fee, Amy (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Fullerton, Hon. / L'hon. Merrilee (PC)	Kanata—Carleton	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
Gill, Hon. / L'hon. Parm (PC)	Milton	Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism / Ministre des Affaires civiles et du Multiculturalisme
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gravelle, Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hassan, Faisal (NDP)	York South—Weston / York-Sud— Weston	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor—Tecumseh	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Hillier, Randy (IND)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Solicitor General / Solliciteuse générale
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Karahalios, Belinda C. (NBP)	Cambridge	
Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	
Ke, Vincent (PC)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
Khanjin, Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
Kramp, Daryl (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
Kusendova, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga- Centre	
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
MacLeod, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa (PC)	Nepean	Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries / ministre des Industries du patrimoine, du sport, du tourisme et de la culture
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
McKenna, Hon. / L'hon. Jane (PC)	Burlington	Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues / Ministre associée déléguée au dossier de l'Enfance et à la Condition féminine
McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Miller, Norman (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Mitas, Christina Maria (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough- Centre	
Monteith-Farrell, Judith (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Morrison, Suze (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (IND)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Park, Lindsey (IND)	Durham	
Parsa, Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Hon. / L'hon. Kaleed (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	Associate Minister of Digital Government / Ministre associé délégué de l'Action pour un gouvernement numérique
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines, des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Roberts, Jeremy (PC)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
Romano, Hon. / L'hon. Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	President of the Treasury Board / Président du Conseil du Trésor
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Simard, Amanda (LIB)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Singh, Gurattan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction / Ministre associée déléguée aux Petites Entreprises et à la Réduction des formalités administratives
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
Vacant	Ajax / Ajax	
Vacant	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Vacant	Elgin—Middlesex—London	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Randy Pettapiece
Teresa J. Armstrong, Toby Barrett
Lorne Coe, Rudy Cuzzetto
Goldie Ghamari, Randy Hillier
Christina Maria Mitas, Judith Monteith-Farrell
Michael Parsa, Randy Pettapiece
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Thushitha Kobikrishna

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ian Arthur
Ian Arthur, Will Bouma
Stephen Crawford, Catherine Fife
Ernie Hardeman, Mitzie Hunter
Logan Kanapathi, Sol Mamakwa
Jeremy Roberts, Dave Smith
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Michael Bushara

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Logan Kanapathi
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Mike Schreiner
Jill Andrew, Robert Bailey
Will Bouma, Guy Bourgouin
Chris Glover, Mike Harris
Logan Kanapathi, Sheref Sabawy
Amarjot Sandhu, Mike Schreiner
Daisy Wai
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: Gilles Bisson
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Aris Babikian
Deepak Anand, Aris Babikian
Gilles Bisson, Lorne Coe
Wayne Gates, Robin Martin
Norman Miller, Billy Pang
Amanda Simard, Marit Stiles
John Yakabuski
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tanzima Khan

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Daryl Kramp
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lucille Collard
Lucille Collard, Christine Hogarth
Daryl Kramp, Natalia Kusendova
Jim McDonell, Suze Morrison
Randy Pettapiece, Gurratan Singh
Donna Skelly, Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Kevin Yarde
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Thushitha Kobikrishna

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Présidente: Laurie Scott
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: France Gélinas
Rima Berns-McGown, France Gélinas
Goldie Ghamari, Faisal Hassan
Jim McDonell, Sam Oosterhoff
Laurie Scott, Vijay Thanigasalam
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tanzima Khan

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Taras Natyshak
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Hogarth
Deepak Anand, Toby Barrett
Jessica Bell, Stephen Blais
Stephen Crawford, Rudy Cuzzetto
Christine Hogarth, Michael Mantha
Taras Natyshak, Michael Parsa
Amarjot Sandhu
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Aris Babikian
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Fraser
Aris Babikian, Lorne Coe
John Fraser, Vincent Ke
Laura Mae Lindo, Paul Miller
Billy Pang, Jeremy Roberts
Dave Smith, Daisy Wai
Jamie West
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Présidente: Natalia Kusendova
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Bhutila Karpoche
Aris Babikian, Jeff Burch
Amy Fee, Michael Gravelle
Joel Harden, Mike Harris
Bhutila Karpoche, Natalia Kusendova
Robin Martin, Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Vanessa Kattar

**Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight /
Comité spécial de la surveillance de la gestion des situations
d'urgence**

Chair / Président: Daryl Kramp
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Tom Rakocevic
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
John Fraser, Christine Hogarth
Daryl Kramp, Robin Martin
Sam Oosterhoff, Tom Rakocevic
Donna Skelly, Sara Singh
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell