



DOWNEY DIGEST

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A NOTE FROM DOUG

Spring is right around the corner! Warmer temperatures will soon be upon us, and the community will be in full swing with events for the season. Our province is lifting almost all remaining Covid related restrictions, and I encourage everyone to shop local as much as possible. Full, in person sitting sessions will resume at Queen's Park, and my xregular riding Fridays will resume for local events and constituent meetings. I look forward to seeing many of you in person again, in the coming weeks!

REOPENING ONTARIO

On March 1, 2022, the provincial government will take additional steps to ease public health measures, so long as public health and health system indicators continue to improve. This includes lifting capacity limits in all remaining indoor public settings.

As of February 17, 2022, capacity limits were lifted in restaurants, bars and other food and drink establishments without dance facilities, non-spectator areas of sports and recreational fitness facilities, including gyms, cinemas, meeting and event spaces, including conference centres or convention centres, casinos, bingo halls and other gaming establishments, and all indoor areas of settings that opt in to proof of vaccination requirements.



REOPENING ONTARIO

Ontario will also lift proof of vaccination requirements for all settings at this time. Businesses and other settings may choose to continue to require proof of vaccination. Masking requirements will remain in place at this time, with a specific timeline to lift this measure to be communicated at a later date.

To manage COVID-19 over the long term, public health units can deploy local and regional responses based on local context and conditions.

Additionally, as of Friday, February 18, 2022, Ontario has expanded booster dose eligibility to youth aged 12 to 17. Appointments can be booked through the provincial booking system and the Provincial Vaccine Contact Centre, as well as at select pharmacies administering the Pfizer vaccine. Appointments will be booked approximately six months (168 days) after the second dose.

ELIMINATING LICENCE PLATE RENEWAL FEES AND STICKERS

The Ontario government is making life more affordable and convenient for nearly eight million vehicle owners by eliminating licence plate renewal fees and the requirement to have a licence plate sticker for passenger vehicles, light-duty trucks, motorcycles and mopeds, effective March 13, 2022.



ELIMINATING LICENCE PLATE RENEWAL FEES AND STICKERS

The government has introduced red tape reduction legislation that enables the province to refund eligible individual owners of vehicles for any licence plate renewal fees paid since March 2020. Vehicle owners will receive a cheque in the mail starting at the end of March and throughout the month of April.

To receive a refund cheque, vehicle owners who have recently moved will need to confirm that their address information on their vehicle permit or driver's licence is up-to-date at: **[Ontario.ca/AddressChange](https://www.ontario.ca/AddressChange)** by March 7, 2022, and pay any outstanding fees, fines or tolls. For more information and/or assistance with changing an address, vehicle owners can call ServiceOntario's dedicated line at 1-888-333-0049.

ONTARIO'S SAFE EMPLOYERS RECEIVING UP TO \$1.5 BILLION REBATE

Ontario's safe employers are receiving a rebate of up to \$1.5 billion as Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) surplus funds are returned for the first time. This rebate will give 300,000 businesses back approximately 30 per cent of their annual premium payments, helping create new jobs and allowing bigger paycheques for workers. This builds on the governments \$2.4 billion that has already been given back to employers through premium reductions, while maintaining benefits for injured workers.



The surplus distribution will only be provided to safe employers, who will receive their rebates starting in April. For a business with 80 to 125 employees, this could mean receiving \$28,000 to reinvest in their business and workers.

This distribution comes only four years after the elimination of the board's historic unfunded liability. Today, the WSIB is in its strongest financial position in its history, and as of September 30, 2021, has \$6.4 billion in reserve.