

Public health

MPP Robin Lennox: Good morning, Madam Speaker. This question is for the Premier. We are seeing report after report about measles outbreaks across our province. The numbers are unprecedented, with 155 new cases just last week. This is not where we should be. Measles is highly contagious but highly preventable. But too many children are still unvaccinated, vaccine misinformation is rampant, and thousands of students are at risk of suspension.

We need to urgently provide support to public health units and family doctors to ramp up vaccination campaigns to prevent more outbreaks. Why haven't we heard of a plan from our province?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Response? I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Thank you, Speaker. Great to see you in the chair.

To the new member from Hamilton Centre, congratulations on your victory. I hope that we can work together.

It's important that you raise this issue because, obviously, measles is a 100% preventable illness. As a result, we have been working very closely with the Chief Medical Officer of Health. In fact, in March 2023, he was sending out memos reminding public health units that they had to refocus their efforts to ensure childhood vaccines were caught up.

That work is ongoing. We have ensured that our public health units have all of the support they need. They have additional vaccines when they need it. They have additional opportunities to do those very important awareness campaigns.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Supplementary?

MPP Robin Lennox: No parent wants to see their child get sick, or worse, from a preventable disease like measles. And now, more than ever, Ontarians need an accessible, publicly funded and publicly delivered health care system. Public health care is an essential service and a core Canadian value.

Yesterday, during the Premier's throne speech, he said that this government would "prioritize patients and their health above ... dogmatic ideology." Can the Premier please clarify which dogmatic ideology he was referring to?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Respectfully, I'm not sure what ideology the member is talking about. But I can tell you, every single investment we have made in public health units across Ontario—every time we put it in our budgets, the NDP vote it down.

We have had investments in public health units across Ontario since 2018—20% increases to ensure our public health units have the support and investments they need. We will continue to ensure that caregivers—that parents, that educators—understand the importance of vaccines, but I also respectfully ask the member to look at her caucus and say, "Why are we voting against investments in our public health units?"