

From Queen's Park by Sylvia Jones MPP ? Budget continues to expand Ontario's enormous debt

The Liberal government introduced their 2017 budget April 27.

The presented budget showed with certainty that the government is misleading Ontarians on the state of our province's debt a year before the next election.

To be clear, despite the government's claims, this is not a balanced budget. This does not address the massive debt that Ontario has accumulated under the McGuinty and Wynne Liberal governments. Since the Liberals took office in 2003, they have increased the debt from \$139 billion to \$312 billion this year. The government is hiding a more than \$5 billion operational deficit through cash grabs, one-time revenue like the selloff of Hydro One, and unauthorized pension assets, which the independent Auditor General said the government cannot count towards their bottom-line. This means that the debt is currently projected to be at \$312 billion, and is expected to go up an additional \$24 billion in the next two years.

The important question is why does this matter to you and your family? The problem with growing debt is that it's "crowding out" paying for the services we need and deserve, meaning the larger the debt becomes the more the government takes away from services to pay the interest on the debt. In practical terms this means that the province now pays more in debt interest (\$12 billion) than they spend on post-secondary education (\$8.4 billion) and community safety (\$2.8 billion) combined. With interest rates at record lows, the cost of servicing that debt is only set to rise in the future.

The second problem with the growing debt is that we increasingly burden future generations with a massive debt obligation.

Currently each and every Ontarian is responsible for \$22,103 for the province's debt. That \$22,103 is enough money to buy a new car; two and half years worth of groceries for the average family or 11 years of gas money for the average family.

The budget also failed to address the hydro crisis this government created. The government's scheme will do nothing to address the root cause of the hydro crisis: bad energy contracts which lock taxpayers into 20-year contracts for overpriced wind and solar power; the fire sale of hydro one and out of control executive contracts, like the CEO of Hydro One making \$4.5 million in 2016.

In the end, the government's approaches to the debt and hydro are not what Ontarians need. Ontarians need real action on these issues that does not just kick the can down the road.

