

From Queen's Park by Silvia Jones MPP ? Ombudsman's recent report highlights Hydro One problems

Last week, Ontario's Ombudsman released his 2014-2015 Annual Report.

In the Ombudsman's report, it highlights issues regarding the Family Responsibility Office (FRO), the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) and the Workplace Safety Insurance Board (WSIB). One of the significant issues highlighted in the report was Hydro One's overbilling scandal. Last year alone, the Ombudsman's office received 3,499 complaints about Hydro One.

Unfortunately, this will be the last Ombudsman report that highlights the problems of Hydro One, because the Wynne Liberal government has stripped away independent oversight of Hydro One.

Too often, I have heard complaints about soaring energy costs in our province, and the terrible practices at Hydro One. In all, the cases my office and I heard this year, regarding hydro bills that have gone unpaid, are well over \$1,000. In one particular case, a customer received seven hydro bills in one month and were in the range of \$2,400 to \$3,700, even though their hydro bill on average was about \$300 per month. That is a staggering jump, and clearly shows there are issues at Hydro One. Customers are paying what they can, but they simply can't keep up, resulting in families living in a state of energy poverty.

When I first became an MPP in 2007, I received one call about hydro per month, now I receive one or two calls a day. The Wynne Liberals have no plan to deal with the systemic problems at Hydro One that continues to hurt Ontarians across the province. Instead, the Wynne Liberals plan to sell-off Hydro One, even though 73 per cent of Ontarians do not want Hydro One to be privately owned. The Ontario government should be about protecting Ontarians from the problems of Hydro One, instead they are ignoring Ontarians' concerns and exacerbating them and forcing Ontarians to continue paying the highest hydro rates in all of North America. Worse yet, is the process for selling-off Hydro One will be made behind closed doors, and once sold, Hydro One will never be evaluated by the Auditor General, the Ombudsman and the six other Ontario government watchdogs.

The Wynne Liberals have completely botched the energy file, whether it is the \$2 billion Smart Meter scandal, the \$1 billion gas plant scandal, or the overbilling practices at Hydro One and now the sell-off of Hydro One.

The Wynne Liberals are not in it for Ontarians. We need to fix Ontario's crippled energy sector before it's irreversible. Please join me and my Progressive Conservative colleagues in calling for an end to the Hydro One sell-off.

