

From Queen's Park by Sylvia Jones MPP ? An eventful spring session wraps up at legislature



The spring Legislative session came to an end recently, and what an eventful session it has been.

Whether it is banning the use of natural gas; deleting government hard drives related to the Pan Am Games; or cutting-off children over the age of five from accessing life-changing therapy, this has been a session this government would like to forget.

For more than two months, my leader Patrick Brown and I as the Critic for Children and Youth Services have shared personal stories of families impacted by the government's decision to remove children over the age of five from accessing Intensive Behavioral Intervention (IBI) therapy. Individuals and organizations, including the Ontario Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists, Autism Ontario, the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, the Ontario Association of Behavioural Analysis, the chair of the government's expert panel, the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, and organizations including ETFO, OSSTF, the OFL, CUPE and OPSEU, have united to oppose the government's announcement. In addition, more than 20 municipalities, including Orangeville, Caledon, Shelburne, Melancthon and Mulmur, have passed resolutions calling on the government to reverse their decision. It's time for the government to start listening to the experts and the thousands of parents impacted, and allow children over the age of five to access this life-changing therapy.

Last month, a leaked version of the government's Climate Change Action Plan included details about the government's intention to ban the use of natural gas for home heating. This goes to show their intention to make life harder for everyday Ontarians. There are 76 per cent of Ontarians who use natural gas to heat their home. If the government got its way, it would cost Ontarians an additional \$3,000 per year and \$4,500 to retrofit their home to use electricity that has skyrocketed in cost under this government's watch. While we agree that climate change is a threat that needs to be addressed, the government's plan is reckless and economically disastrous. The Progressive Conservative Caucus and I support a practical and realistic plan that will protect the environment help grow our economy and make energy affordable for Ontario families.

The Auditor General released her special report on the 2015 Pan Am/Parapan Games June 8, and confirmed that the Pan Am Games were neither on time nor on budget, costing taxpayers over \$300 million more than expected. In addition, the Auditor General noted that she was unable to obtain all answers and documents requested, and couldn't get access to hard drives because they were destroyed. Following a letter from my PC Caucus colleague, the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario will now investigate the record-keeping practices of the Pan Am Games staff.

While the Legislative session may be over, my PC Caucus colleagues and I will continue to ensure the interests of Ontarians are heard.