

From Queen's Park by Sylvia Jones MPP ? Auditor General's report highlights government mismanagement

Ontario's Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk released her 773-page annual report Dec. 2, which included 14 value-for-money audits into various government programs and initiatives.

Some of the areas the Auditor General conducted value-money-audits include Ontario's electricity power system planning, Community Care Access Centres, Ontario's long-term care homes and child protection services in Ontario. Overall, the Auditor General's findings highlighted how the government's lack of oversight and decisions have impacted services Ontarians rely upon as well as wasting billions of Ontarians hard earned money.

Some of the most revealing findings from the Auditor General's report were regarding the government's mismanagement of Ontario's energy sector. The Auditor General found that over the last 10 years, the government's directives ignored advice from experts like the Ontario Power Authority, and did not consider the long-term impacts and the state of the electricity market when making these decisions. As a result, Ontarians and small businesses paid \$37 billion above market value for energy over the last eight years. The Auditor General expects it will only get worse, as Ontarians and businesses are forecasted to pay an additional \$133 billion from 2015 to 2032.

Since 2009, Ontarians have been forced to pay \$9.2 billion more for renewable energy than previously because of the government's high subsidy guaranteed contracts to renewable energy producers. Over the last eight years, electricity consumption has decreased from 151.1 million megawatt an hour to 139.8 million megawatt an hour, yet electricity charges for residential and small business electricity consumers increased by 70 per cent from 5.32 cents a kilowatt an hour to 9.06 cents a kilowatt an hour.

Not only has the Auditor General criticized the government's handling of the energy sector, but experts like Ontario's Financial Accountability Officer (FAO) have warned that the government's planned Hydro One sell-off will impact the Province's financial state and ratepayers, costing Ontario up to \$500 million in annual revenue. Because the government stripped away all independent oversight of Hydro One, the FAO, the Auditor General and the Ombudsman will no longer be able to investigate Hydro One to ensure Ontarians are receiving value for their service. The government needs to listen to the concerns raised by the Auditor General and the FAO and stop any further sell-off of Hydro One.

We need a credible plan that will turn Ontario into an attractive place to do business instead of forcing companies to leave our province to go to other jurisdictions with cheaper energy prices.

To learn more about issues I have raised regarding Ontario's hydro rates, please visit my website at www.sylviajonesmpp.ca

