

From Queen's Park by Sylvia Jones MPP ? Government fails to address issues that matter to Ontarians

With the spring session coming to a close and many children from across Ontario receiving their report cards, I thought I would provide my report card for the Liberal government's actions.

In February, I wrote about the priorities the residents of Dufferin-Caledon had articulated to me over the winter, and that they wanted the government to address in the spring session of the Ontario legislature. They included stopping the skyrocketing hydro rates, addressing the growing mental health crisis and making a decision on the GTA West Corridor. Unfortunately, the government has failed on all three of these issues.

First, there is mounting information that shows that the Liberals' hydro plan will cost Ontarians for generations. A recently released Liberal cabinet document revealed that the cost of hydro, after short term relief, will once again rise after the provincial election in 2018. The government's independent budget watchdog, the Financial Accountability Officer, also showed that this plan could cost Ontarians as much \$93 billion. Ontarians want hydro relief but they do not want to jeopardize future generations to do so. This makes it clear that the government has neglected to address the systemic problems with hydro. Instead the government's short-term solution will cost Ontario taxpayers billions in the long-run and will see a return of skyrocketing hydro rates.

Second, I have heard from many individuals about the crisis in mental health that continues across Ontario. Children's Mental Health Ontario revealed last year that some children in the province are waiting for more than a year and a half for mental health treatment. Unfortunately, that trend continues, with the Canadian Institute for Health Information showing that there has been more than a 60 per cent increase of hospitalizations for children and youth with mental health disorders in the last decade.

Finally, the government has failed to come to a decision on the future of the GTA West Corridor, after almost 12 years of frozen land. Most recently, the government extended the deadline for their Advisory Panel to April 2018. It was another indication that the government is intent on kicking the can down the road on this decision. In the meantime, landowners still have their land frozen, with no indication about when a decision will be made.

In addition to those three issues, the government has still failed to address other key priorities. They refuse to restore Auditor General oversight of government advertising, to stop spending taxpayer dollars on partisan ads. The government also failed to address the factors behind the lack of supply of housing which is leading to a shortage of housing in the Greater Toronto Area. Overall, this spring session was a disappointing failure by the government.

