

From Queen's Park by Sylvia Jones MPP ? Government hiking fees is costing Ontarians and businesses more

The Wynne Liberal government has raised 90 service fees which will cost Ontarians about eight per cent more than last year. According to the independent non-partisan Financial Accountability Officer (FAO), this is primarily due to a 12 per cent increase in vehicle and driver registration fee revenue. Currently, the province charges more than 400 service, licence and permit fees. The government's increases to fees means it will collect about \$200 million more in revenue than last year.

The FAO is the independent budget watchdog of the government and provides reports and analysis of the government's policies. Of the 97 changes, five are new fees, 90 fees have increased, two have been eliminated and none have decreased. Of particular note, there has been a 12.9 per cent increase in the fees for drivers licences, oversize/overweight licences, the commercial vehicle operator record (CVOR) and driver instructor licence replacements, as well as an eight per cent increase in the cost of a licence plates renewal. In fact, nearly 64 per cent of the money the government collected from fees has come from vehicle and driver registration fees.

The ever-increasing cost of driver's licences and other registration fees is an added burden for Ontario families and drivers. In Dufferin-Caledon and in rural Ontario, people do not have the option of riding the bus. There is no subway system to take individuals in Amaranth, Grand Valley, Mono or Bolton to work. They must drive to make a living.

Another interesting example are the fees that are significantly more expensive than the cost of providing the service they are supposedly paying for. There is a legal requirement for the service fee rate to have a reasonable connection to the cost of the service provided. As an example, the FAO points to the personal property security fee is 16 times larger than the cost of providing the service and the Ontario incorporation/business fees are three times the cost of providing the program.

In the end, this is just another example of the Liberal government's track record of making life more and more unaffordable for families and businesses. Whether it is skyrocketing hydro rates, the housing affordability crisis or increasing fees, the Liberals have consistently proven that their policies are making of life more expensive for families and businesses.

