

From Queen's Park by Sylvia Jones MPP ? How will the budget impact you?

When the provincial government released the Ontario budget, the changes the government announced required us to look at the fine print, as they will make living in Ontario more expensive if you are a senior, own a car, heat a home, have a family, or a job. Life just got more expensive under the Wynne Liberals.

One of the major announcements in this year's budget was the increase in the price of gasoline and natural gas. Home owners and drivers can now expect to pay as much as \$400 more per year for gas and \$475 more per year for home-heating. Energy rates are already unaffordable for many Ontarians. Now this government is trying to do the same with filling up your car or heating your home. This is particularly challenging for Dufferin-Caledon residents because of our high percentage of commuters and the lack of transit options. In addition, as the government eliminated the \$30 fee to have a Drive Clean test they did not eliminate the program itself, which means Ontarians are still required to have this test performed.

While the government announced that they will be increasing funding for hospitals by one per cent, they didn't mention that hospital budgets have been frozen for the last four years. Not only are there no plans for more long-term care beds or physiotherapy services for seniors, this budget will now make drug prescriptions more expensive for our province's seniors by increasing the Ontario Public Drug Program from \$100 to \$170 per year and increasing the copayment from \$6.11 to \$7.11 for each prescription. Ontario's health care system is in disarray because of this government's mismanagement, and they have shown they have no plan to improve patient care in this province.

The government expanded the availability of wine and cider to include grocery stores and farmers' markets, but not without a four per cent increase on the price of wine.

Much has been written about the government's new grant, called the Ontario Student Grant, that will offer free average tuition for students from families with income less than \$50,000. However, families will no longer be able to claim the Tuition and Education Tax Credit, due to the government cancelling this tax credit two years before they implement the Ontario Student Grant. Other tax credits the government has eliminated include the Children's Activity Tax Credit and the Home Renovation Tax Credit. The cost on the provincial treasury to service Ontario's debt is \$11.8 billion per year, and as a result of this Liberal government's mismanagement, Ontario's debt has more than doubled since 2003 to over \$300 billion. Now each Ontarian is on the hook for more than \$22,000 of the debt. If we don't start dealing with the government's debt crisis, the services Ontarians expect won't be there when we need them.

