

From Queen's Park by Sylvia Jones MPP ? Hydro plan is about the election, not residents of Dufferin-Caledon

My leader Patrick Brown wrote to the President of the Treasury Board March 17 calling for the stop of spending taxpayer dollars on self-congratulatory ads regarding the government's proposed hydro scheme.

My Progressive Conservative colleagues and I have several concerns about the Liberals' new ad campaign.

First, it seems clear that these ads are a desperate attempt by the government to increase its popularity. Government funds must not be used to help the cause of the Liberal Party of Ontario.

Second, those ads are costing millions of dollars to promote a scheme which has not been introduced into the legislature. The ads do not help people who are struggling with their hydro, and is costing millions of dollars. Those funds could be directed to help people with their hydro, funding youth mental health or assisting Community Living Dufferin with their pay-equity obligations. The ads help the Liberal party and their friends. It is simply another example of the Ontario government not respecting the value of taxpayer's money.

Third, the auditor general has indicated that these ads are inappropriate. To quote the Auditor General, "the ads likely wouldn't have been approved under the old government advertising rules." In fact, it was the Liberal government which drastically reduced the ability of the Auditor General to oversee government advertising.

Finally, and crucially, the ads are running before legislation has been introduced. This is an alleged breach of Parliamentary rules. To quote my PC Colleague an Ontario PC House Leader Jim Wilson, "neither MPPs nor the public even know what the new hydro scheme looks like, what it will cost, and who will get left behind. Clearly, these advertisements serve no purpose other than to promote Kathleen Wynne's re-election."

That is why Wilson rose on a point of privilege, arguing a case of contempt of Parliament by the Ministry of Energy.

The advertisements are self-congratulatory, a waste of taxpayer dollars, would have been disallowed by the auditor general and are potentially in violation of the rules of Parliament. They are too similar to ads aired in 2015, when the government ran \$8.1 million self-congratulatory ads promoting an Ontario retirement pension scheme that never came to fruition. That is why I am pleased to stand with my leader Patrick Brown and call on the government to stop the advertising campaign, and publicly release the budget for the ad campaign.

