

From Queen's Park by Sylvia Jones MPP ? Liberal government?s budget misses the mark

The Liberal budget, which was released April 23, will not help the economic climate in Ontario.

This budget does not contain a substantive plan to get Ontario back on a firm economic footing and eliminate the deficit by 2017-18. Once again, it appears the warnings of the experts have been ignored by the Wynne Liberals. Credit rating agencies, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and the Auditor General, all told the Premier to change the fiscal direction our province is on, or risk serious consequences for the services we hold dear.

In this budget, the amount spent on the interest on the debt is growing at an annual rate of 5.7 per cent ? the highest growth area in this budget, higher than education, higher than health. The third highest spending line in our province after health care and education is paying interest on the debt. And even more, there is no plan to deal with the debt. The Auditor General, in her recent report, warned about the ?crowding out? of services because of money that needs to be diverted to pay the interest on the debt. Cuts to programs such as nurses and other front-line health care workers, and to services for seniors like cataract surgeries, physiotherapy and diabetes testing strips will only continue as the interest costs increase.

Prior to the budget, the Ontario Progressive Conservatives asked the Liberals to include five items that would help all Ontarians. They included a commitment to protect jobs by abandoning the ill-conceived Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. A commitment to fix our overburdened home care system. A request that the government not proceed with a misguided carbon tax, so jobs wouldn't be lost. We asked for measureable efforts to decrease skyrocketing hydro rates that have some Ontarians choosing whether to heat or eat. And we wanted to see a serious, credible, detailed plan to balance the budget by 2017-18.

None of these five asks have been addressed.

And with the plan to sell major assets, like Hydro One, the Liberal government is trading short term gains for long term consequences.

Finally, on the deficit, the Liberals show that they continue to have an addiction to spending. Spending is up by \$2.4 billion more dollars and the budgets of all but three ministries are going up.

Ontarians can't afford this latest Liberal budget

