

From Queen's Park by Sylvia Jones MPP ? More cuts to Ontario's health care system

There was a time when Ontario's health care system was the gold standard for other jurisdictions to follow; now our health care system is being strained as a result of poor decision-making by the Wynne Liberal government. With a debt and deficit that continues to climb higher each day and no plan to balance Ontario's budget by 2017-2018, the Wynne Liberal government has decided to make cuts to Ontario's health care system.

Last week the Ontario government announced it intends to decrease the number of medical residency places by fifty over the next two years, meaning fifty young individuals will be forced to train elsewhere or give up on their dream of becoming a physician. This shortsighted decision was supposedly made because the Liberal government believes there will be an over-supply of doctors.

Ontario does not have an oversupply of doctors; the truth is there are 800,000 Ontarians, many living in rural Ontario, who do not have access to a family doctor. While locally, we have had some good news in Dufferin-Caledon with the recent addition of three new family physicians to replace Dr. Peter Cole, shortages are still a problem in many parts of Ontario.

The Wynne Liberal government has already allowed our health care system to erode; hospital budgets have not increased in the last four years and the Wynne Liberals have further reduced health care spending by \$54 million in this year's budget. That means less money for long-term care beds and services and positions previously offered in our hospitals are being eliminated or decreased.

In Dufferin-Caledon I hear from many individuals and families who have experienced service cut-backs. Last year, the Central West CCAC cut-back or eliminated personal support worker (PSW) support for some clients, claiming they have no more money to take on new patients. The cut-backs for physiotherapy in long-term care homes are another example of short-term thinking.

As a result of decreasing services from the CCAC, residents in Dufferin-Caledon have made some difficult choices to ensure the health care needs of their family are looked after including; going without the required service, paying for private care by taking on personal debt, or moving to other communities where the services have not been reduced or restricted. Wait lists for services continue to increase as the level of service declines.

Unfortunately, this is the reality of our health care system, in large part because of poor decisions and inaction by the Wynne Liberal government. By continuing the wasteful spending in government and decreasing the number of medical residencies in the province, the Wynne Liberals are ignoring 800,000 Ontarians who are without a primary-care physician and the thousands of patients who are on wait lists or have been told their medical needs will not be covered. The Wynne Liberal government needs to get its priorities in order, and instead of cutting essential services for Ontarians they should focus on funding front-line health care services

