

From Queen's Park by Sylvia Jones MPP ? Overly generous Hydro pensions need reform



The day before the August 2014 long weekend, the Provincial government decided to quietly release a report dealing with pensions at the Province's energy agencies.

What the report found was that one of the large contributing factors to rising energy bills in Ontario is the costs associated with unsustainable energy agency pensions. Shockingly, taxpayers are paying \$5 for every \$1 contributed by those receiving these pensions. Meanwhile, rising taxes and energy bills are putting a greater strain on Ontario taxpayers to save money for their own retirement, or even afford daily expenses. Most disturbing is the government decided to hide this report from the public since March of this year, ensuring it was not available to the opposition members or the voting public.

In 2012, taxpayers contributed \$585 million to pension plans for energy agency employees. This will translate into Dufferin-Caledon residents again seeing higher energy costs over the next four years because unfortunately, electricity consumers will have to pay the increased cost. It is projected that energy prices, although they have already doubled in the last 10 years, will continue to increase another 40 per cent over the next four years.

It is important for Ontario families to be aware of where their hard-earned tax dollars are being spent. These hydro pensions were reviewed by pension expert Jim Leech and he discerned that these companies are 'pushing the limits.' It is understood that these pensions need to be overhauled and more funds need to be allocated by employees into their own pensions than is currently the case. I believe the provincial government needs to seriously address this issue and quickly, before it gets worse. These pensions should be a fair deal for hydro employees, however they also need to be a fair deal for taxpayers.