

From Queen's Park by Sylvia Jones MPP ? Setting priorities for the spring legislative session



As the spring legislative session gets underway, it is time to reflect on what I have been hearing from Dufferin-Caledon residents and raise their concerns at Queen's Park.

Many of my discussions surround the pressures on families' budgets and the struggle for businesses to stay competitive. Whether it is the highest electricity rates in North America or the Cap and Trade cash grab, business are losing confidence in Ontario's economy and residents are continuing to find it difficult to make ends meet.

According to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, only 24 per cent of businesses have confidence in Ontario's economy. People continue to share with me their shocking electricity bills and the impact it is having on their standard of living.

One resident recently showed me her bill and her delivery charge was greater than the cost of the electricity she used!

I will continue to present your 'Hydro horror stories' to the Ontario legislature to reinforce the need for change. Stories like these are the best way to ensure that the government gets the message that Ontarians need action now. If you have a 'Hydro horror story' to share with me, please contact my office at sylvia.jonesco@pc.ola.org or call 1-800-265-1603. You can also visit my website, www.sylviajonesmpp.ca, and sign a petition calling on the government to address skyrocketing hydro rates.

I also have been hearing from Dufferin-Caledon residents about their concerns regarding the province's management of health care and infrastructure. Earlier this year, I had the opportunity to participate in the Pre-Budget Consultations of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. At the Standing Committee I heard from many organizations and individuals who showed that there is a serious lack of action from this government regarding youth mental health and key infrastructure projects. Ontario Children's Mental Health raised serious concerns about the shocking wait-times for youth mental health services, leading to a 60 per cent increase in hospitalization of youth. Hearing concerns like these are even more frustrating, given my time spent studying mental health and addictions while serving on the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. The committee presented 23 recommendations seven years ago. I will continue to call on the government to implement the Select Committee's recommendations and to make positive change that will address mental health and addictions services in Ontario.

Finally, I was honoured to be asked by my leader Patrick Brown Feb. 2 to serve as the Progressive Conservative Critic for Infrastructure. I am looking forward to holding the government to account in this important area, as I continue my work as Deputy Leader of the Progressive Conservative Caucus. Whether building schools or highways, the projects that Minister of Infrastructure oversees impacts all Ontarians. An important local infrastructure project that the government is stalling is the environmental assessment of the GTA West Corridor. After taking the unprecedented step of suspending an environmental assessment in 2015, the government is leaving large amounts of land frozen in the proposed highway's corridor and giving residents, businesses and municipalities no clear understanding of what will happen next. I will continue to hold the government to account on this important issue and many others during the spring session of the Ontario legislature.