

From Queen's Park by Sylvia Jones MPP ? What I heard at the Association of Municipalities Ontario conference

Last week, I attended the annual Association of Municipalities Ontario (AMO) Conference; hosted this year in Ottawa. It was an excellent opportunity to meet with municipalities across Ontario, including the Town of Caledon and the Region of Peel, to discuss their communities. As the Progressive Conservative Critic for the Ministry of Infrastructure, I know how essential it is for the provincial and municipal levels of government to work together to deliver well-maintained infrastructure.

Infrastructure is key to the health, safety and prosperity of our communities. Well-maintained infrastructure ensures job creation, keeps individuals safe on the roads, ensures that families have the healthcare space they need, keeps our drinking water safe and much more.

Unfortunately, under the Liberal government, Ontarians have been paying more and getting less. Ontario has promised to spend more than \$190 billion in infrastructure over 10 years, but continues to fail to follow through on key infrastructure promises. Take for instance, Kitchener two-way, all-day GO service. Many residents in Dufferin-Caledon would like more options for GO service. In 2014, the Liberals made a promise for two-way, all-day GO train service between the Waterloo Region and Toronto within five years. But now the government has doubled the timeline for the project.

There are also substantial concerns about the government's oversight of infrastructure projects. The independent Auditor General reported in 2015 that the government is underestimating cost overruns, saying that Ontarians could be seeing cost overruns as much as 25 per cent. One example would be repaving Highway 403 every two years, even though repaving is only necessary every 15 years, and or installing a bridge truss upside down.

In his speech to the municipal leaders at the conference, PC Leader Patrick Brown reaffirmed his commitment to ensure that municipalities have the authority to reject applications for massive green energy projects. Brown also reaffirmed the Ontario PCs' unequivocal support for natural gas expansion. Brown also spoke of the 'stealth downloading' of mental health costs onto municipalities. Specifically, the government's underfunding of our mental health services has meant an increased reliance on emergency service workers at a great cost to municipalities.

Under the Liberals, municipalities are getting squeezed. The PC party is committed to working towards the benefit of municipalities and their residents. I will continue advocating for municipalities to ensure that the Ministry of Infrastructure is spending tax dollars with the care and detail that Ontarians expect.

