

Jones angry at fee hikes for drivers

Ontario is continuing its gradual increase of driver and vehicle licence fees, but opposition members, including Dufferin-Caledon MPP Sylvia Jones, are not pleased.

The government announced last week the aim is to improve infrastructure and support key services.

Fees for new driver's licences and renewals, driver's licence replacements, driver examinations and vehicle permits are among those being increased. Until last year, they had not been increased in 15 years.

The government is maintaining these changes are needed to cover the rising costs of maintaining provincial roads, bridges and highways and to support the quality services Ontarians rely on, such as education and health care. Even with these increases, Ontario's passenger vehicle licence fees will remain lower than many other provinces in Canada.

'Making sure our roads, highways and bridges remain in good repair is critical to Ontario's economy,' Transportation Minister Glen Murray said. 'These moderate fee changes will help recover the cost of providing the quality services Ontarians expect and help maintain the province's highway infrastructure for years to come.'

But Jones voiced frustration in her reaction to the announcement.

'Drivers in Ontario are being forced to foot the bill for 10 years of scandal and reckless spending by the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals,' she declared, also pointing out that last spring, the Progressive Conservatives exposed a Liberal plan to introduce new user fees on everything from phone bills to 9-1-1 calls.

'Transportation Minister Glen Murray says these soaring fees are intended to cover 'rising costs',' said Jones. 'But we all know that if the Liberal government had not mismanaged Dufferin-Caledon taxpayers' money so badly, they wouldn't need to be consistently hitting people with more and more new fees and taxes.'

'This province deserves better than a government that thinks it can spend hundreds of millions of dollars saving its members' seats in an election, only to then turn around and seek to have new drivers, long-haul truckers, and GTHA commuters pay for its scandals,' she added. 'Dufferin-Caledon families and residents deserve a government that will bring this province back in order by reducing waste while treating taxpayers and drivers with the respect they deserve.'

The New Democrats at Queen's Park weren't very pleased either.

NDP Consumer Services Critic Jagmeet Singh (MPP for Bramalea-Gore-Malton) said the Liberal government's planned hike in fees is a slap in the face to Ontarians.

'With yesterday's announcement of across-the-board fee hikes for drivers, the Liberals are showing that they just don't get the financial pressures facing Ontario households today,' he said. 'During budget negotiations, New Democrats demanded a 15 per cent cut to auto insurance to make life more affordable for drivers. But the Liberals are making life more expensive for drivers in Ontario by adding on these new fees. Instead of reducing insurance rates by 15 per cent this year, they're taking an extra year to give drivers the relief they deserve now.'

'The Liberal government that's asking drivers to pay more and more every year so they can get to work and drop the kids off at school is the very same Liberal government that's wasted over a half a billion dollars to move the Mississauga and Oakville gas plants,' Singh said. 'This government should be making life more affordable for Ontarians rather than sticking them with the bill at every turn.'