

Jones wonders why money was not spent

By Bill Rea

The Provincial government seems to have a lot of money to spend on infrastructure which is not being spent, and Sylvia Jones wanted to know why.

Dufferin-Caledon's MPP raised the issue in Question Period in the legislature recently.

But Infrastructure Minister Bob Chiarelli told her the government is spending considerable funds on projects.

Jones cited public accounts documents which indicated the government failed to spend almost \$3.3 billion in infrastructure spending during the fiscal year 2016-17.

'Ontarians are waiting for essential infrastructure for their communities, from hospitals to highways,' Jones told Chiarelli, according to Hansard. 'Will the minister provide a list of the projects that are now delayed or not started because 20 per cent of the money he promised to communities was not distributed?'

'I'm surprised by the question, Mr. Speaker, given the extent of infrastructure investments we are making as a government,'

Chiarelli replied, adding Jones should know the government has a project moving ahead over 13 years that will cost \$190 billion.

He added most of these funds are getting out fast.

'We don't take any back seat with respect to our investments in infrastructure,' he added. 'It's been very, very well received across the province.'

Jones countered that according to public accounts documents, the pending shortfall 'was due to 'lower-than-forecast construction activity for the period'.

'Can the minister tell Ontarians why he failed to get these projects going?' she asked. 'Was it red tape? Was it inaction? Or is this another stretch goal?'

'We have the largest investment in infrastructure in the history of the province of Ontario,' Chiarelli replied, although he agreed there have been some delays, due, he said, to the processing with the federal government.

He also said some of these projects are in ridings currently represented in the legislature by Progressive Conservatives.

'Some of those municipalities have not been able to deliver the actual shovel in the ground on time, but they're coming,' he added.

Jones later indicated she was not too pleased with the answers she got from Chiarelli.

'The Minister response was disappointing because that he chose to blame federal and municipals partners rather than explaining why \$3.3 billion wasn't spent on needed infrastructure projects,' she said.

'The government makes announcements, but fails to actually deliver the projects,' she said. 'It's clear that the government is more interested in making promises than building roads, hospitals and transit.'

'The communities in Dufferin-Caledon are looking for investments in projects,' Jones added. 'Sewage waterworks, an advanced green at Highway 89 and 124, GO service to Shelburne and Bolton, yet the government did not spend \$3 billion that was allocated in the 2016 budget.'