

PCs angry the government wasted \$70 million on ORPP

By Bill Rea

Ontario's Liberal government is taking a lot of credit for strengthening retirement security for workers, but the Progressive Conservative opposition is of the opinion that a lot of money has been wasted.

The government's effort was focused on the Ontario Retirement Pension plan (ORPP).

The government is boasting that they, along with the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Administration Corporation (ORPP AC) spent up to \$70 million between 2013 and 2016 to develop and start implementing the plan.

But Dufferin-Caledon MPP Sylvia Jones called it "70 million dollars for nothing."

Finance Minister Charles Sousa and Associate Finance Minister Indira Naidoo-Harris issued a joint statement last Thursday acknowledging the agreement reached with the federal government in June to enhance the Canada Pension Plan (CPP).

The statement pointed out that the Liberals had promised to improve retirement security during the 2014 provincial election campaign through ORPP, and they ended up forming a majority government after that election.

They also pointed out that many Ontarians are unable to save enough to maintain their standard of living after retirement.

"This can lead to a substantial savings gap for too many Ontario workers in retirement," the statement said.

"Since 2013, Ontario has advocated for an enhancement to the Canada Pension Plan," the statement read. "When the previous federal government refused to act, we moved forward in 2014 with the ORPP. Ontario's determination to provide enhanced retirement security for workers by establishing the ORPP was a catalyst in reaching a national consensus on CPP enhancement."

The government continued with its efforts while waiting to see what enhancement were coming.

"The Provincial Liberals kept spending money to ramp up a program that was not necessary," Jones charged.

She was also annoyed that the government created a position for Naidoo-Harris, complete with a driver and staff, and it seems she's got nothing to do.

"We get frustrated and, hopefully, we remember," she added, pointing to the Provincial debt of some \$300 billion.

"It's things like this that add up and make a difference," she charged.

"Sadly, this is yet another example of Liberal waste and mismanagement at the expense of Ontarians' hard-earned tax dollars, just like the \$2 billion gas plant scandal we are still paying for," commented York Simcoe MPP Julia Munro, Progressive Conservative (PC) critic for ORPP. "In typical Liberal fashion, this government needlessly and recklessly pushed their agenda forward, putting politics ahead of Ontario's best interest."

"Getting the CPP enhancement could have cost a plane ticket to Vancouver," Munro added in a statement issued by the PC Caucus.

"Instead the government wasted \$70 million."