

Sylvia Jones MPP ? Jones reflects on the busy session that just ended at Queen's Park

The second session of the 40th Parliament has wrapped up at Queen's Park and what a session it has been.

We have witnessed never-ending scandals, particularly surrounding the Liberal decision to scrap two gas-fired power plants in Oakville and Mississauga. This session, we've also seen an increase in hydro rates, a budget that doesn't address overspending, seniors put on notice about cuts to physiotherapy, tradeworkers forced to pay more fees for a college they didn't want and a continuation of yet more failed Liberal policies.

When the Legislature resumed sitting Feb. 19 with a new premier at the helm, it appeared Ontarians were ready to see what Premier Kathleen Wynne would do to make amends for the Liberal scandal that has cost provincial taxpayers \$1 billion, when the Liberals cancelled two gas plants for the benefit of saving seats during the 2011 election.

What we now know is that the Liberals deliberately lied about the true cost of the cancellations, and went to great lengths to cover up the true costs. As a result, the OPP have responded to a Progressive Conservative letter and launched a criminal investigation into the illegal destruction of public documents.

Where has public accountability gone? In the midst of the controversy, the Wynne Liberal's made a deal with the NDP and created a budget that includes many NDP initiatives, and all in a desperate attempt to try and hold onto power. The unfortunate consequence is that the NDP's support for the budget allows the Liberals to once again try and sweep their mismanagement of taxpayer money under the rug.

Other legislative business still proceeded, and I had the opportunity this session to highlight concerns of Dufferin-Caledon residents, including a statement on the increases of hydro rates and a statement about changes in the Special Services at Home and the Passport funding program. Changes to this program have proved very challenging for families who have children with disabilities. As well, I was pleased to recognize Shelburne Rotary's 75th anniversary, Orangeville's 150th and a group of students at Robert F. Hall for a play they performed in New York City called In the Pink.

Additionally, I also introduced two private member's bills (PMBs): Bill 38, Helping Volunteers Give Back is a reintroduction of a previous PMB that, if passed makes it more affordable for volunteers who give of their time to more than one organization by eliminating the cost of purchasing multiple background checks in a one-year period. Bill 38 will allow for an annual fee for multiple background checks. This bill is intended to help promote more volunteerism within our communities. Bill 56, the Aggregate Recycling Promotion Act if enacted, would prohibit any public sector person or body (Government of Ontario and municipalities included) from precluding the use of secondary aggregates in public sector construction work. A common theme that was introduced during the discussions with the public and the committee reviewing the Aggregate Resources Act (ARA) was the overwhelming need for virgin aggregate because recycled aggregate was being overlooked by many sectors. This bill ensures that concern is addressed.

I hear from many residents who are astonished by the Liberal government's actions and have asked that we hold them responsible. Premier Wynne promised to restore transparency to the Legislature ? it's shameful that it took a criminal investigation to hold her to her word.

