

## The cost of reducing the Provincial deficit

The Province at this time is about \$325 million in debt and spends approximately \$12 billion alone on interest each year.

Though the figure is staggering and quite depressing, Premier Doug Ford has been on a mission opening all the books his government can to cut back on the deficit.

His campaign was one full of promises from middle-class income tax cuts to repealing the cap-and-trade program.

Ford would then reaffirm his commitment by making changes to education, school building repairs, employment and social services and even health care coverage.

Whether or not you vote for the Liberals, Progressive Conservatives, NDP, Green Party or any other registered parties, it's clear Ontario has a growing mammoth-size of a problem and changes need to be made.

It can be argued that Ford can raise taxes on wealthy people and giant corporations by closing loopholes in the tax code to ensure they pay their fair share. However, if the Province can't afford the services they provide, isn't it reasonable to make cuts in services in order to stay afloat?

When discussing the Province's growing deficit, I like to relate it to your own personal or household budget.

Whether you're a single dependent with an annual income of \$50,000 or a household with an income of \$100,000, it's clear you should watch what you spend. You would allocate your funds to essentials such as rent or mortgage, food, gas, water, heat, hydro, and clothing for yourself or children, and any outstanding loans you have. If you have money saved over, you may then spend it on luxuries such as internet, a gym membership, a music streaming app, alcoholic drinks, take-out food, entertainment tickets (whether shows and concerts) a pack of cigarettes, cannabis or any other non-essential that you can live without.

It wouldn't be smart to spend more money on non-essential items, putting yourself in more debt while you have other amenities that require your funds. You shouldn't have to take out a loan because you can't afford the essentials you need, depleting your funds on unnecessary items you can live without, despite how much you want it.

What you spend your money on is on you but I'm sure many will argue that if you can't afford something, don't buy it. Leave that store empty handed. Take that item out of your Amazon shopping cart. Pay your bills before you can go out.

In education, Ford has made cuts to the EPO fund (Education Programs-Other). The fund was made to put an end to a number of programs such as after-school jobs for youth in low-income neighbourhoods, tutors in classrooms and Indigenous-focused collaborative inquiry among others.

For school repairs, Ford has scrapped the \$100 million fund meant to fix dilapidated school infrastructure. Ontario schools now have a backlog of nearly \$16 billion, according to media reports.

In health care, the former Liberals announced free prescription medication for people under 25. Ford's government announced youth will no longer have access to the benefits if they have their own private coverage.

Ford also abolished Ontario's basic income pilot project. The program set aside \$150 million over three-years and was meant to provide financial support to 4,000 low income residents.

While some of these cuts, and others, are controversial, it's clear the Province can't afford to sustain these programs. They have to do their due diligence in cutting down the deficit and we'll just have to wait and see what kind of repercussions they have on our

society. We simply can't afford everything.