

From Queen's Park by Sylvia Jones MPP ? PC caucus wants to see a credible plan in provincial budget

The Liberal government will release the Ontario Budget today (Feb. 25).

With pre-budget consultations having concluded less than a month ago, it is hard to believe that the consultations were considered in the crafting of this year's budget.

My Progressive Conservative caucus colleagues and I have outlined three requests that the people of Ontario want to see included in the budget. Our recommendations to the Liberal government are a reflection of what people from across Ontario, and in Dufferin-Caledon, are concerned about. The three recommendations are:

1. A credible plan to make energy affordable, which shall include halting any further sale of shares in Hydro One. Ontario has among the highest energy rates in North America. Since the Liberal government was elected, hydro costs have increased by more than \$1,000 per year for the average family, and an additional 42 per cent increase is expected between 2013 and 2018.
2. A plan to properly manage Ontario's health care system, which shall include reversing the current and planned cuts to doctors, nurses and hospitals. Cuts to health care in Ontario have meant that patients are not receiving the quality health care services they deserve. In Ontario, we have seen an \$815-million cut to physician services, \$50-million in cuts to physiotherapy services for seniors, the loss of 50 medical residency positions and a total cut of \$54-million in health care funding.
3. A credible plan to balance the budget, and immediate action to pay down the debt. The Financial Accountability Officer's report on the economic and fiscal outlook of Ontario found that the Liberal government has no real plan to balance the budget. If revenue and spending continue as they have for the past four years, the Liberal government will run a deficit of \$3.5 billion in 2017-2018. Ontario government's debt has grown by 91 per cent in less than 10 years ? the highest rate of growth of any federal or provincial government in Canada. The interest on Ontario's debt for 2015-2016 is estimated to be \$11.3 billion, which is the equivalent of a year of long-term care for 222,043 seniors, 44,120 beds in a palliative care unit for one year, 40,347 hospital beds for one year, 169,052,488 MRI scans.

Ontario has among the highest energy prices in North America, cuts to front-line health care services are rampant across the province, and our debt is growing at the fastest rate of any federal or provincial government in all of Canada.

Life has become increasingly difficult under the Wynne Liberals. We in the Ontario PC caucus want to see real change made in this year's budget that is in the best interest of all the Ontarians, from every corner and community of our province. We will see if the government agrees.

