

?Restart? shows continuing problems for Liberal Government

By Sylvia Jones, MPP

Dufferin-Caledon

Earlier this week, Premier Wynne used her throne speech to attempt to press the restart button on her time in office and her electoral fortunes.

Unfortunately, it really highlighted that life is harder for Ontarians under the Liberals.

The Premier has finally decided that Ontarians are in crisis because of hydro costs. It is unfortunate that it has taken the government this long to realize what the people of Dufferin-Caledon have known for a long time: Ontarians cannot afford hydro.

Despite knowing that 8 per cent of Ontarians are in energy arrears, that 1 in 20 business have said they will have to close their doors to due hydro rates, and that Ontario hydro is the most expensive in North America, it took the Liberals losing three by-elections in a row to realize that they needed to act.

In the end, the attempt to press the restart button will not help erase the Liberal Government's 13 years of waste and mismanagement. The Government needs to listen to Ontarians and hear their concerns. That is why I have been all around Dufferin-Caledon this summer making sure local residents know about the issues affecting them and listening to residents' opinions. It is clear that there are a variety of issues that continue to affect Dufferin-Caledon residents, and I plan on raising these issues in the Legislature to make sure that your concerns are heard.

A major concern for residents is Ontario's debt. Currently, servicing the province's debt is the third highest expenditure in the province, behind only health and education, respectively. Unfortunately, the problem is growing. Ontario's Financial Accountability Officer has projected that the province's net debt will rise to \$350 billion by 2020-21.

Another major concern is the uncertainty surrounding the GTA West Corridor, the proposed 400 series highway from Milton, north of Brampton through Caledon, to Highway 400. Recently, the Government made an unprecedented move to shut down an environmental review and strike a panel to consider alternatives.

Meanwhile, landowners in the affected area have their land frozen and do not know the future of the project. That is why I wrote to the Minister of Transportation in June calling for a more transparent process.

Another major issue is the Coordinated Review: the proposed changes to the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, the Greenbelt, the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and the Niagara Escarpment Plan. I have continued to stress the need to expand the public consultation process to include a public open house in Dufferin County.

Recently, the Minister announced an extension of the deadline for consultation from September 30 to October 30, but has not committed to a public open house in Dufferin County.

I will continue to advocate for more consultation so the voices of Dufferin-Caledon residents can be heard in this process.

As the fall session moves forward, I will continue to express your concerns to the Government on these issues and more. If you have any questions about provincial issues or want your opinion heard, please contact my office at sylvia.jonesco@pc.ola.org or 1-800-265-1603.