

Statement from Ontario's Independent Legislative Officers

For Immediate Release

May 14, 2015

(TORONTO) Ontario's Independent Officers of the Legislative Assembly are calling on the provincial government to reverse plans in the Budget Bill that they believe will significantly reduce important oversight powers.

The Officers report to the Assembly, not to the government of the day, and provide independent, expert reports and analysis of government operations and service delivery. We take seriously our legislated authority to hold government and provincial agencies and corporations accountable on behalf of the Legislature and all Ontarians.

The Officers believe that the government's proposals in Bill 91, the *Building Ontario Up Act (Budget Measures) 2015*, will reduce the scope of the reviews that can be conducted on behalf of the people of the province. They encourage the government to reconsider its decision to remove Independent Officer oversight of Hydro One and its subsidiaries, given that the government will control Hydro One assets well into the future.

The Officers are concerned that while the government intends to eventually hold 40 per cent of Hydro One over the long term, their ability to assess its value and quality of service, among other matters, would be eliminated, either upon the Budget Measures receiving Royal Assent or within six months of that date. Passage of the bill would result in the following:

- The Auditor General would not be able to conduct performance audits of Hydro One and its subsidiaries.
- The Ombudsman would have no ability to investigate public complaints about Hydro One and its subsidiaries.
- The Information and Privacy Commissioner would no longer be able to oversee the right of access to records held by Hydro One.
- The Financial Accountability Officer would not be able to examine the impact of planned Hydro One operations on consumers or the economy.
- Lobbyists would no longer be required to report whether they are lobbying Hydro One and its subsidiaries.
- The Integrity Commissioner would no longer review Hydro One expense claims to ensure prudent spending of taxpayer dollars.
- The French Language Services Commissioner remains concerned that Hydro One and its subsidiaries would never be subject to the *French Language Services Act*.

The government would take the revenue from its Hydro One stake and reflect it in its consolidated revenues, and yet Ontarians would receive no operational information on Hydro One from Ontario's independent Legislative Officers.

The work of Ontario's Officers depends first and foremost on their independence from government. This principle is sacrosanct because there is value to independence, to the public trust in government.

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