

MPPs claim travel, accommodation expenses

By Mark Pavilons

Taxpayers are footing the bill for MPPs who live outside the GTA, travelling to work, and staying in Toronto while doing their job. The annual expense and accommodation for MPPs was released recently, showing Ontario's 107 MPPs spent \$2.7 million on travel and Toronto accommodation expenses for 2013-14.

Veteran York-Simcoe MPP Julia Munro claimed a total of \$25,506 ? \$16,866 for Toronto accommodation; \$4,130 for travel between her home and Queen's Park; \$3,153 for travel within the riding, and \$1,357 for Assembly travel.

By comparison, in 2012-13, Munro claimed a total of \$25,623. She claimed \$3,899 for travel from home to Queen's Park; \$3,950 for Assembly travel; \$3,192 for travel within York-Simcoe and \$14,594 for accommodation in Toronto.

For 2014-14, Oak Ridges-Markham MPP Dr. Helena Jaczek claimed a total of \$7,19 ? \$3,456 for travel within the riding; \$2,146 for travel between home and Queen's Park; \$974 for Assembly travel and only \$573 for accommodation in Toronto.

In 2012-13, Jaczek claimed a total of \$9,041 ? \$2,657 between home and Queen's Park; \$1,388 for Assembly travel; \$4,367 for travel within Oak Ridges-Markham, and only \$629 for accommodation in the city.

Under the rules, any member whose principal residence is in excess of 50 kilometres away from the legislature can claim accommodation expenses of up to \$21,237 annually for MPPs and \$22,237 for ministers and opposition leaders.

Minister Jaczek said the rules are in place for a reason and the need for Toronto accommodations by members is 'totally justified.'

She even defended the expenses claimed by Munro and Dufferin-Caledon MPP Sylvia Jones, given the long commutes.

She remembers driving about two hours each way en route to Queen's Park. Commuting is a 'complete waste of time' and takes away from an MPP's productive hours.

She's fortunate in that she purchased a condo in Toronto that she uses regularly.