

****>Ont<** Economy**

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TORONTO - A dispute between ****>Ontario<*****'s Liberal government and the auditor general over what the province's true deficit is may be doomed to repeat itself next year.

Auditor general Bonnie Lysyk's office and public-sector accountants disagree about how a pension surplus should be counted.

Under rules the government has been using for more than a decade, the deficit for 2015-16 would be \$3.5 billion, but Lysyk says the rules should be changed and that would leave the deficit at \$5 billion.

She says the government wouldn't have access to a surplus in the public servants' and teachers' pension plans, and therefore it shouldn't appear on the books.

The Liberals are setting up an outside expert review panel to look at the issue, but since neither the government nor the auditor are bound by whichever rules the panel sides with, the dispute could be repeated during the next examination of public accounts.

Progressive Conservative Leader Patrick Brown says the province already has independent advice, in the form of the auditor general herself, and setting up another external review amounts to continuing to look for second opinions until the government finds one it likes.

(The Canadian Press)

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