Ontario

NEWS

Treasury Board Secretariat

Ontario Release 2015-16 Public Accounts

Expert panel to review accounting standards

The government has received the Auditor General's opinion on the 2015-16 Public Accounts of Ontario, allowing it to release the Public Accounts today. The results presented in the Public Accounts released today are identical to those presented in the unaudited financial statements released earlier this week. The Auditor General has provided her opinion, which says that the 2015-16 results are fairly stated but qualifies her report for lack of restatement of the 2014-15 results on the pension asset issue.

In preparing the Public Accounts, the Province's professional accounting staff and the Auditor General's Office engaged in discussions about the appropriate application of the Public Sector Accounting Board's standards (PSAB) in relation to pension accounting for the Province's jointly sponsored pension plans.

After careful consideration, the government adopted the Auditor General's fiscal interpretation for the treatment of jointly sponsored pension assets for 2015-16. In order to comply with the interpretation, a time-limited regulatory amendment was required to change the accounting treatment for the 2015-16 Public Accounts. The impact of the change resulted in an additional $10.7 billion being added to the net debt and accumulated deficit and increase in the annual deficit to $1.5 billion.

The Auditor General's qualified opinion is based on the government's decision to report the accounting change in 2015-16 without restating the prior year's results. Restating the previous year's results would have had no impact on the annual deficit or net debt reported in the 2015-16 Public Accounts.

The following table illustrates the impact of the qualification in the auditor's report.

(in millions)	Annual Deficit 2014-15	Accumulated Deficit2014-15	Net Debt 2014-15	Annual Deficit 2015-16	Accumulated Deficit 2015-16	Net Debt 2015-16
Province's financial statements	-10,315	-187,511	-284,576	-5,029	-202,696	-305,233
Auditor General Opinion	-11,268	-196,665	-293,730	-5,029	-202,696	-305,233
Difference	-953	-9,154	-9,154	NIL	NIL	NIL

As previously noted, the Auditor General's qualification relates only to the presentation of the 2014-15 comparative financial information. There is no impact on the 2015-16 annual deficit, ending accumulated deficit or net debt.

The government is forming an independent Expert Panel to deliver advice and recommendations to the Government as to the application of public sector accounting standards to Ontario's pension assets.

Panel members will also provide advice on how to value pension assets reported on the Province's books, taking into account future decisions which might be made by the plan's sponsor or sponsors. The report is expected later this year.

QUOTE

"I wish to thank the Auditor General for providing her audit opinion of the 2015-16 Public Accounts. The Public Accounts confirm this is seventh year in a row that Ontario has beaten its annual deficit target. Ontario remains committed to balancing the budget in 2017-18 while remaining balanced in 2018-19."

— Liz Sandals, President of the Treasury Board

QUICK FACTS

Public Accounts are a retrospective report that compares Ontario's actual performance to what was planned in the Budget.

Treasury Board Secretariat prepares Public Accounts in accordance with the accounting principles for governments recommended by the Public Sector Accounting Board.

[ADD link to Expert Panel terms of reference]

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Matt Ostergard, Minister's Office, 416-326-3839
Jason Wesley, Communications Branch, 416-327-4023