Re: Treatment of Pension Assets for Financial Statement Purposes

From: "Wernick, Michael" <michael.wernick@pco-bcp.gc.ca>
To: "Orsini, Steve (CAB)" <steve.orsini@ontario.ca>
Cc: "Dupont, Serge" <serge.dupont@pco-bcp.gc.ca>
Date: Thu, 06 Oct 2016 17:34:27 -0400

Steve, our Comptroller General, Bill Matthews, is quite adept with these issues and would be happy to lend another perspective.

From: Orsini, Steve (CAB) [mailto:Steve.Orsini@ontario.ca]
Sent: Thursday, October 06, 2016 03:17 PM
To: Wernick, Michael; 'Marcia.nelson@gov.ab.ca' <Marcia.nelson@gov.ab.ca>; 'Alanna.koch@gov.sk.ca' <Alanna.koch@gov.sk.ca>; 'donna.miller@leg.gov.mb.ca' <donna.miller@leg.gov.mb.ca>; 'juan.roberto.iglesias@mce.gouv.qc.ca' <juan.roberto.iglesias@mce.gouv.qc.ca>; 'Judy.wagner@gnb.ca' <Judy.wagner@gnb.ca>; 'lauralee.langley@novascotia.ca' <lauralee.langley@novascotia.ca>; 'ptledwell@gov.pe.ca' <ptledwell@gov.pe.ca>; 'BernardCoffey@gov.nl.ca' <BernardCoffey@gov.nl.ca>; 'kelvin.leary@gov.yk.ca' <kelvin.leary@gov.yk.ca>; 'Mike_Aumond@gov.nt.ca' <Mike_Aumond@gov.nt.ca>; 'CDArcy@gov.nu.ca' <CDArcy@gov.nu.ca>
Cc: 'Kim.henderson@gov.bc.ca' <Kim.henderson@gov.bc.ca>; Dupont, Serge; Mendelsohn, Matthew; Ghali, Rodney; Tanguy, Patrick; Hannaford, John; Rioux, Tomina; 'Erin.Gee@cra-arc.gc.ca' <Erin.Gee@cra-arc.gc.ca>; Betzner, Lynn (CAB) <Lynn.Betzner@ontario.ca>
Subject: Treatment of Pension Assets for Financial Statement Purposes

I look forward to seeing you next week.

Earlier today, Ontario released its 2015-16 Public Accounts (see news release below).

As you may be aware, Ontario's Controller's Office in Treasury Board Secretariat and the Provincial Auditor General have a difference of opinion as to whether to record a pension "asset" (i.e., in a surplus position) on the province's financial statements. In short (and not a technical description), the AG considers it to have no value (for provincial purposes) as the province does not have unilateral control of the asset, whereas the Controller is of the view that there is value (split 50/50) given that they are jointly sponsored pension plans with joint control (subject to an agreement).

In order to resolve the issue on a timely basis, the Province regulated the results of the Auditor General's audit (i.e., use the same numbers) for the 2015-16 fiscal year and will conduct an independent view of the accounting treatment for future years.

If any of you have had experience in dealing with pension assets for financial statements purposes, I would appreciate having a side-bar discussion with you if the opportunities arises.

Steve

From: Ontario News [mailto:newsroom@ontario.ca]
Sent: October-06-16 1:38 PM

To: Orsini, Steve (CAB)
Subject: Ontario Releases 2015-16 Public Accounts

Ontario Newsroom

News Release

Ontario Releases 2015-16 Public Accounts

October 6, 2016

Expert Panel to Review Accounting Standards

Ontario's Annual Report and Consolidated Financial Statements for 2015-16 show Ontario's deficit is $3.5 billion lower than the $8.5 billion projected in the 2015 Budget, with the province's deficit for 2015-16 at $5 billion. This is $0.7 billion lower than the $5.7 billion in the 2016 Budget interim projection.
The government has received the Auditor General's opinion on the 2015-16 Public Accounts of Ontario, enabling it to release them. The results reported in the Public Accounts are identical to the unaudited financial statements released earlier this week. They confirm Ontario has beaten its annual deficit target for the seventh year in a row.

The Auditor General has provided her opinion, which says that the 2015-16 results are fairly stated but qualifies her opinion for lack of restatement of the 2014-15 results.

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 (PSAB) standards, specifically in relation to pension accounting for the province's jointly sponsored pension plans.

A regulation was made to allow the public service to sign-off on the impact of the Auditor General's view on accounting for pension assets in Ontario's 2015-16 financial statements. The Province filed a time-limited regulation, which legislates the accounting for pension assets of two jointly-sponsored pension plans for 2015-16 in a manner that is consistent with the fiscal outcome proposed by the Auditor General. The impact of the change resulted in an additional $10.7 billion being added to the net debt and accumulated deficit and an increase in the annual deficit of $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 financial results for 2015-16, including the annual deficit and net debt.

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, accumulated deficit or net debt as illustrated in the table below.

($ millions)	Annual Deficit 2014-15	Accumulated Deficit 2014-15	Net Debt 2014-15	Annual Deficit 2015-16	Accumulated Deficit 2015-16	Net Debt 2015-16
Province's 2015-16 financial statements	10,315	187,511	284,576	5,029	202,697	305,233
Auditor General's 2015-16 opinion	11,268	196,665	293,730	5,029	202,697	305,233
Auditor General's 2014-15 opinion	10,315	187,511	284,576	n/a	n/a	n/a

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.

Responsible financial management is part of our plan to create jobs, grow our economy and help people in their everyday lives.

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.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Read the 2015-16 Public Accounts and explore supplementary information available through new data visualization tools
- Watch a video explaining Public Accounts
- Learn about the government's fiscal cycle

QUOTES

"I wish to thank the Auditor General for providing her audit opinion of the 2015-16 Public Accounts. The Public Accounts confirm this is the 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*

CONTACTS

Jason Wesley
Communications Branch
416-327-4023

Matt Ostergard
Minister's Office
416-326-3839

99 Wellesley Street West 4th floor, Room 4620 Toronto ON M7A 1A1