

# Commission on the Reform of Ontario's Public Services - Drummond Report Highlights

For the full report go to:

<http://www.fin.gov.on.ca/en/reformcommission/chapters/report.pdf>

For the executive summary go to:

<http://www.fin.gov.on.ca/en/reformcommission/chapters/executive-summary.pdf>

## **Background:**

The Ontario government must curtail its spending with the kind of cuts not seen since the Mike Harris years, according to a report by former TD Bank chief economist Don Drummond. Released Wednesday, Drummond's report calls for extensive spending reductions and warns that without his recommended belt-tightening, the province will face a crippling \$30-billion deficit by 2017-18.

Drummond warns that failing to follow such severe austerity measures could cause Ontario's debt, which currently stands at \$215 billion, to balloon to more than \$411 billion in five years.

To avoid this and balance the books by 2017-18, Drummond outlines 362 recommendations in his 665-page, two-volume report, which he calls "a wrenching reduction from the path that spending is now on."

According to the report, the Ontario government must implement all 362 recommended reforms to restrain program spending growth enough to achieve balance by 2017-18.

It is important to read the following highlights of recommendations of the Drummond report within the context of planning for our community. The proposed cuts will have severe implications to our health and social service system and will require extensive local planning to ensure that people still have access to required services.

## HEALTH

- Introduce a wage freeze for doctors, who are the highest paid in the country
- Revamp Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) by giving them more responsibility over funding and integration
- Link drug prices to income as opposed to age for seniors and those on social assistance
- Shift treatments currently done in hospitals to home care and clinics
- Create more nursing programs and make better use of nursing practitioners
- Expand role of pharmacists to permit them to give routine injections, inhalations and immunizations
- Create online system for prescription refills, test results and appointment scheduling
  
- Cap growth of health-care spending at 2.5 per cent each year to 2017-18
- Increase the use of home-based care
- Make the portion of pharmaceutical costs paid for by seniors rise more sharply as income increases
- No increase in total compensation for Ontario's doctors
  
- Consider expanding health coverage to include pharmaceuticals, long-term care and aspects of mental health care

## EDUCATION

- Increase the average class size from 22 to 24 in Grades 9 to 12 and from 24.5 to 26 in Grades 4 to 8. Set the cap in class size at 23 in primary grades and eliminate the other requirement that 90 per cent of classes must be 20 or fewer
- Cancel the full-day kindergarten program, or delay full implementation from 2014-15 to 2017-18
- Phase out 70 per cent of 13,800 non-teaching staff by 2017-18
- Encourage secondary schools with low attendance to expand to a Grades 7-12 model
- Scrap 25 per cent of money allocated for textbooks and classroom supplies
- Consider raising the retirement age for teachers. Currently, the average teacher retires at 59 after 26 years of service and collects a pension for 30 years
- Encourage colleges and universities to specialize so they're not all offering the same type of programs
- Keep current annual tuition increases to a maximum of five per cent but consider eliminating a new 30 per cent tuition grant/tuition rebate.
- Cap growth in primary and secondary education spending at one per cent each year to 2017-18
- Cap growth in post-secondary education spending (excluding training) at 1.5 per cent each year to 2017-18

- Put "strong pressure" on the federal government to fund on-reserve First Nations education equal to per-student provincial funding for elementary and secondary education. Failing that, the province itself should step up to provide that funding.
- Reject further employer rate increases to the Teachers' Pension Plan beyond the current rate

## **Social Services**

- Consolidation of OW and ODSP into a local administrative system and better integration with Employment Ontario re employment services for OW and ODSP recipients. If savings are made within the 0.5% limit, the report states it be re-invested into the following three areas in order of importance/sequence:
  1. Raising the asset caps now imposed on SA recipients
  2. Providing coverage in the Ontario Drug Benefit Program on the basis of income and not social assistance eligibility because this is a disincentive to work for recipients
- The planned increase of the Ontario Child Benefit from \$1100/child to \$1310/child be cancelled (\$245 million saving).
- Moving from verification and compliance tracking of SA clients to an audit-based accountability approach, which the Social Assistance Review has also indicated it is recommending.
- People on ODSP are employable and there should be more supports to assisting them to get into the workforce.
- Cap growth in social services spending at 0.5 per cent each year to 2017-18.
- Decrease program spending in all other areas by 2.4 per cent each year to 2017-18.
- More integrated human services models in areas like children's mental health and children and youth services and shifting from agency/program funding models to direct individualized funding models in the developmental disabilities field which is a "more competitive and market-driven approach".

## **JUSTICE**

- Negotiate with federal government to take over responsibility for inmates incarcerated longer than six months. Currently, inmates must be sentenced to two years or more to be in a federal responsibility.

## **OTHER**

- Close one of two Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. head offices
- Close one of two casinos in Niagara Falls

- Permit slot machines to be placed outside horse racing facilities
- Encourage the Liquor Control Board of Ontario to open more stores and raise alcohol prices
- Do not pay tax refunds, renew licences or vehicles unless outstanding fines, speeding and parking tickets are paid
- Higher water bills to recover the full cost of water and wastewater services
- Begin charging for parking at GO Transit parking lots
- Eliminate the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit "as quickly as possible"
- Consider having security providers take over police officers' "non-core" duties
- Negotiate the transfer of responsibility for incarceration for sentences longer than six months to the federal government, up from the current two years
- Use licence and registration suspensions as a tool to help collect some Provincial Offences Act fines, allow fines to be added to the offender's property tax bill and offset tax refunds against such unpaid fines

**Resources:** CBC News Posted: Feb. 15, 2012 5:06 AM ET, Toronto Star, Feb. 16, 2012, Globe & Mail, Feb. 16, 2012, Correspondence Social Planning Council Network of Ontario.

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