



Community and Health Services Department
Office of the Commissioner

MEMORANDUM

TO: Community Services and Housing Committee Members
Health and Emergency Medical Services Committee Members

FROM: Joann Simmons, Commissioner of Community and Health Services

DATE: October 29, 2007

RE: Summary of Ontario Government Statements and Possible Implications

Although it is early days yet in the Provincial Government's new mandate, the platform provides an outlook on where we may see policy and program developments over the next several years that could impact our own budget and service planning.

Because of this, I have attached for your information a summary of Provincial Government's statements related to the programs and services that the Community and Health Services Department provides to York Region residents.

Attachment 1 highlights those related to the Community Services branches of the department — Employment and Financial Support, Family and Children's Services, and Housing Services. It also looks at other program and policy areas that could impact on our clients, community partners, and funding.

Attachment 2 highlights platform statements related to Health Services, including Emergency Medical Services, Long Term Care and Seniors, and Public Health. It also looks at other health sectors that link to the services we provide to residents.

Outlook

In a nutshell some key policy directions that may impact on Community and Health Services include:

- A proposal to develop and fund a full-day pre-school program, which could link or have implications to Best Start initiatives or child care services depending on the design and implementation of the program.
- More dollars for home care and supportive housing services for seniors, which could lead to more supports overall for York Region residents as well as to our own programs and services in these areas.
- A poverty reduction strategy, tied to the new Ontario Child Benefit, to develop indicators and targets to address child poverty. This is something a broad coalition of provincial organizations have called for.

- A new dental services program for low income working families. We will need to know more about what this means for the services we already provide to Ontario Works clients and lower income families, but increasingly research is showing that good dental health is very important to support healthy outcomes for both children and people working in jobs that do not provide dental coverage.
- Significant increase in funding to the Central LHIN of about \$106 million for Long Term Care Community Support Services in York Region may result in the approval of expansion requests for the Region of York Supportive Housing Program (ACLP) and other Day Centre and Outreach Programs.
- A long term housing strategy, which will include a mix of non-profit and co-op housing. It will be important to watch if there is also a strategy for long term funding, as well as opportunities to address program design issues.

The platform also re-confirms measures announced in the 2007 Ontario Budget related to supporting low income working families, including staged increases to the minimum wage and the Ontario Child Benefit.

Federal developments will also be important. The recent Federal Speech from the Throne suggests that addressing homelessness and poverty, including through the new Working Income Tax Benefit, will be priorities for federal policy, as well as efforts to help families deal with the expenses of caring for elderly parents. It is not clear, however, on the types of other initiatives that the federal government will take on these issues given a commitment to also formally limit federal spending power on new cost-shared programs in areas of exclusive provincial jurisdiction. We will need to see more on how this evolves. The Throne Speech also made mention of improving the management and governance of the Employment Insurance (EI) Account, but it is not clear if this could include any change to EI programs, which the Ontario Liberal Party Platform has included as an area they would like to see an overhaul.

Community and Health Services staff will continue to monitor developments and report back to Committee and Council as appropriate.

TF/kn

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