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PROVINCIAL SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

The Finance and Administration Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report, October 13, 2005, from the Chief Administrative Officer:

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. This report be received for information.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide Committee and Council with an overview of the general direction of the provincial government for the next two years, as outlined in the October 12, 2005 Speech from the Throne.

3. BACKGROUND

The Speech from the Throne serves to formally open the Second Session of the 38th Parliament of Ontario. This is the second speech from the McGuinty government since taking office in 2003, and outlines the legislative agenda for the second half of their four-year elected term.

4. SPEECH HIGHLIGHTS

The speech marks the Liberals' mid-term in office and, therefore, highlighted achievements-to-date, as well as some new areas of focus for the remainder of this term. There will be continued emphasis on the Education and Health sectors; however, a number of smaller, self-contained legislative pieces were noted. Highlights include:

4.1 Education Sector

- Mandatory learning until the age of 18, either in-class, apprenticeship, or work-place training. To support this, the government will introduce an alternative secondary school diploma in the area of "Skill or Trade", and will expand its partnerships with other public, non-profit and businesses in order to better facilitate job placement.
- Increase investment in English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) programs for new immigrants.

- Provide an extra \$6.2 billion for post-secondary education over five years.
- Establish the First Generation Plan that would help students become the first in their family to attend college or universities, with a particular focus on Ontarians with disabilities, members of the aboriginal community, and francophones.

4.2 Health Sector

- Reduce wait times by increasing availability to CT scans, cancer surgeries, cataract surgeries, cardiac procedures, hip and knee replacements, and MRI scans.
- Creation of eighty (80) additional Family Health Teams over the next year.
- Introduce new legislation respecting Long-Term Care.
- Introduce new legislation respecting Local Health Integration Networks.

4.3 Summary of Municipal Issues

From the municipal perspective, the Throne Speech identified a few items of interest, such as

- Intention to introduce a new *Municipal Act* and a new *City of Toronto Act*.
- Further the work with municipalities to establish the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority (GTTA).
- Introduce new legislation for source water protection.
- Introduce new measures and legislation in the area of energy conservation.
- Improve the Environmental Assessment process to ensure transparency and efficiency.
- A Premier-level focus on Agri-Food in terms of research and innovation, re-branding of Ontario food, and working with the federal government to address farm income.

4.4 Other Initiatives

- Introduce legislation to protect provincial parks.
- Allow qualified professionals outside of Canada to access professions and trades in Ontario.
- Guaranteed 15-day turnaround for online birth-certificate applications, or money back.
- Reform of the Drive Clean program.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

A number of the proposed provincial initiatives could impact both the Region and the local area municipalities, such as changes in roles or responsibilities through a revised *Municipal Act*, source water protection measures, energy conservation initiatives, and

partnership in the GTTA. As details emerge, staff will report to Committee and Council as appropriate.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Any local municipal impacts as a result of the Throne Speech are unknown at this time.

7. CONCLUSION

In this their second half of their term in office, the provincial government is continuing its focus in the areas of Education and Health, and the Region can expect to experience at least some residual impacts from these announcements. However, a number of the proposed initiatives in the areas of energy conservation, source water protection, the continuation of work to establish the GTTA, and the introduction of a new *Municipal Act* may give profile to some areas of municipal concern and responsibility. As further details emerge as to provincial plans, staff will report to Committee and Council as required.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.