

Economic statement reveals government's direction

By Mark Pavilons

The stage is set for investment in Ontarians, as revealed by the recent fall economic statement delivered by the Liberal government Nov. 7.

This interim statement is an indicator, leading up to the spring provincial budget.

Oak Ridges-Markham MPP Dr. Helena Jaczek said Premier Kathleen Wynne has put her personal stamp on the province's direction, which is creating an environment for the economy to thrive.

They're investing in people, she said, noting they're addressing shortcomings in the Canada Pension Plan. Finance Minister Charles Sousa has met with his provincial counterparts to discuss enhancing the CPP. The major concern is that the current retirement system in this country is not adequate and it's important to address it now. They are hoping the federal government comes around, but if not, Ontario is prepared to move ahead with a provincial plan, according to the premier.

The Liberals are committed, Jaczek said, to full-day kindergarten and youth employment. They are also concentrating on infrastructure improvements and they've indicated their support for Seneca College's expansion plans.

The government is also encouraging research and development and investment to stimulate the economy and put our entrepreneurial talent to good use.

The Liberals are also promoting Ontario's agri-food business and the use of technology to spark this exciting industry.

The statement was positive and while the province is not out of the woods financially, they're headed in the right direction, Jaczek said.

York-Simcoe's Conservative MPP Julia Munro doesn't see it that way.

In fact, the \$5 billion in increased spending is enough to send shudders through the province, as Ontario is at risk of a downgrade in its credit rating.

The government has announced new methods of generating revenue, such as the green bonds and Munro sees this is a clear indication of where the premier wants to go.

She's oblivious to the messages of restraint, as indicated in the Drummond Report, Munro stressed.

The government seems to have a cavalier approach, particularly in ignoring the massive \$1.1 billion cost of relocating Ontario's gas plants.