



News Release

For Immediate Release

December 7, 2009

ONTARIO'S BRIDGES NOT BEING PROPERLY INSPECTED NOR REPAIRED AS NEEDED: AUDITOR GENERAL

(TORONTO) Some Ontario bridges are in poor condition and the province is taking too long to make repairs, Auditor General Jim McCarter says in his *2009 Annual Report*, released today.

"We found that the Ministry had no plans to make repairs within the coming year to the more than one-third of the 180 provincial bridges identified by its own inspectors as being in critical need of repair within the year," McCarter said.

There are about 14,800 bridges in Ontario, with the province owning 2,800 of them. Municipalities own the remaining 12,000 and are responsible for their maintenance. However, McCarter noted, "We're concerned that the Ministry lacked comprehensive information about the condition of bridges owned by municipalities. What's more, there is currently no legislation on the books that empowers the Ministry to make sure municipalities carry out required biannual inspections on municipally owned bridges, leaving a potential road-safety issue for all Ontarians."

The Report found, for provincially owned bridges:

- The Ministry's own Inspection Manual says a typical bridge examination should take at least two to three hours. However, the audit found that inspectors often conducted five or more bridge inspections a day—and 10 or more bridges were inspected in one day by a single inspector on 36 different occasions between 2006 and 2008, raising doubts as to the thoroughness of these inspections.
- The Inspection Manual also requires a detailed visual "close-up" inspection of each bridge element, which would normally require closing lanes and road shoulders to traffic. For example, it would be almost impossible to make a close-up inspection of the critical elements of certain bridges on Highway 401 in the Greater Toronto Area without closing lanes. However, there have been no such lane closures for the past three years.
- As structures age, they can be expected to deteriorate. Yet the Auditor found that the latest inspection results surprisingly showed an improvement in the overall condition rating of more than 300 bridges, even though little or no rehabilitation work had been done on them since the last inspection.

On a positive note, the Report noted that the Ministry deserves credit for establishing comprehensive standards for bridge inspection that have been adopted by a number of other Canadian jurisdictions.

-30-

For more information, please contact:

Jim McCarter
Auditor General
(416) 327-1326

Andréa Vanasse/Joel Ruimy
Communications
(416) 327-2336