



News Release

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UNCLEAR WHETHER SAFE SCHOOL INITIATIVES ARE WORKING: AUDITOR GENERAL

(TORONTO) The Ministry of Education is spending approximately \$50 million annually on safe-school initiatives, but is not collecting the information needed to know whether these initiatives are having any impact on student behaviour, Auditor General Jim McCarter says in his *2010 Annual Report*, released today.

“The Ministry doesn’t know whether the millions of dollars it is spending are helping to reduce physical and psychological aggression in our schools,” McCarter said today. However, he noted that the Ministry was in the process of hiring a consultant to develop performance indicators at the time of the audit.

Student safety is a key issue in Ontario. A 2009 survey of students in grades seven to 12 by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health found that almost one in three students has been bullied at school, approximately one-quarter had bullied others at school; and 10% had committed an assault.

Following are two of the Auditor’s more significant findings:

- More than half of the \$34 million allocated to initiatives that focused on suspended, expelled, and other high-risk students was distributed to school boards based on their total enrolment, rather than on the actual number of students needing help. The percentage of students suspended in each board ranged from 1% to 11%, suggesting this funding approach may not respond to relative board needs.
- More needs to be done to encourage students to report serious school safety incidents. Responses to the 2009 survey of students that found about 7% of students reported being threatened or injured with a weapon on school grounds. Such offences are generally automatic grounds for suspension or expulsion, but ministry data for the 2007/08 school year show that, in total, less than 1% of Ontario students were suspended or expelled.

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For more information, please contact:

Jim McCarter
Auditor General
(416) 327-1326

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

For more information and to view the full *2010 Annual Report*, please visit www.auditor.on.ca