



News Release

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AUDITOR GENERAL FOCUSES ON HEALTH, PUBLIC PROTECTION IN *2010 ANNUAL REPORT*

(TORONTO) With the province facing large deficits and record levels of provincial debt, it has never been more important that the government obtain value for money for taxpayer dollars, Auditor General Jim McCarter said today on the release of his *2010 Annual Report*.

McCarter noted that this year's Report put a heavy emphasis on the health-care sector, with four value-for-money audits, because "this area accounts for almost 40% of government spending."

Among the Auditor General's findings with regard to health care:

- Long wait-times in hospital emergency rooms had as much to do with delays in freeing up in-patient beds as with a lack of specialist services or patients walking into ERs with minor ailments.
- More than 50,000 hospital patients who could have been discharged endured longer-than-necessary hospital stays during 2009 because of the length of time it took to line up post-discharge care for them.
- The province tends to fund home-care services based on historical allocations rather than on assessments of current client needs, creating a risk that people with identical needs get varying levels of service depending on where in the province they live.
- Progress has been made on increasing the number of donors for organ and tissue transplants, but certain changes could be made to reduce wait-times for organs.

McCarter also carried out value-for-money audits of four programs intended to protect the rights of people and ensure that the principle of fairness prevails, because "the public has a right to expect that the government will protect them and ensure they are treated fairly when dealing with the government and its agencies."

His findings included:

- Family Responsibility Office is still not successfully fulfilling its responsibility for collecting child and spousal support, causing undue hardship for the people who rely on these payments.
- The Municipal Property Assessment Corporation assesses the market value of almost all real-estate in the province. The Auditor found that, in a large sampling, the selling price of one in eight properties varied by more than 20% from the assessed market value determined by the Corporation, suggesting a large number of people may be either paying too much or too little property tax.
- The province spends \$50 million a year on programs to protect children from physical and psychological threats in schools, but collects little reliable information on how effective these initiatives have been.

- provincial body that regulates casinos and slot-machine facilities at racetracks does a good job of ensuring that gaming is operated fairly and honestly, but it should offer gaming patrons more information on the odds of winning.

The Auditor's Report also contains the results of three value-for-money audits relating to the government's role in protecting public resources and assets: Among the findings:

- Ontario businesses are nowhere near meeting provincial goals for increasing both their reduction and recycling of non-hazardous waste.
- Although efforts were made to establish appropriate procedures to quickly distribute billions in infrastructure-stimulus funding, there should have been more of a focus on allocating funds to shovel-ready infrastructure projects.
- Ontario is spending about \$40 million a year to maintain the aging infrastructure at the province's 24 colleges—but estimates and projections suggest the province may need to spend twice as much to ensure that these facilities are properly maintained.

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