



News Release

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IMPROVED OVERSIGHT OF DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES NEEDED: AUDITOR GENERAL

(TORONTO) The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's own estimates are that about 20% of tests conducted at independent health facilities may be inappropriate, Auditor General Jim McCarter says in his *2012 Annual Report*.

"The Canadian Association of Radiologists has echoed the Ministry's estimates and has noted that as many as 30% of CT scans and other imaging procedures contribute no useful information or are inappropriate," McCarter said today after the release of the Report. "On the other hand, patients in about half the municipalities in Ontario may be underserved when it comes to local access to diagnostic services such as radiology and ultrasound."

In Ontario, more than 97% of independent health facilities are for-profit corporations, and the Ministry estimates that about half of them are owned or controlled by physicians. The Ministry is responsible for licensing, funding and coordinating quality assurance assessments of these facilities.

Following are some of the Auditor General's other significant findings:

- Each facility is paid the same amount for each type of service, regardless of the number it performs. Thus, larger facilities in urban areas often benefit from economies of scale, since costs like rent and reception staff salaries do not increase proportionately with the number of services performed.
- Although half of the province's independent health facilities are owned or controlled by doctors, the Ministry has not analyzed the patterns of physicians referring patients to their own facilities. As well, many patients assume they have to go to the facility that appears on their doctor's referral form.
- While the Ministry has improved some of its processes since our last audit, only some of each facility's physicians were being reviewed by the College of Physicians and Surgeons to ensure that their interpretation of diagnostic images was correct. Further, about 12% of facilities had not been assessed at all in the last five years.

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