



# News Release

For Immediate Release

December 10, 2013

## **MORE WORK NEEDED TO KEEP STUDENTS HEALTHY, AUDITOR GENERAL SAYS**

(TORONTO) Many high-school students prefer to eat at fast-food restaurants rather than at their school cafeterias now that those cafeterias are offering healthier food choices under the Ministry of Education's School Food and Beverage Policy, Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk says in her *2013 Annual Report*.

"After healthier food choices were introduced at the three school boards we visited, cafeteria sales decreased by 25% to 45% and vending machine revenues plummeted," Lysyk said today following release of the Report. "High-school principals told us that many students head to fast-food places instead."

The Ontario government recognized that the increasing number of overweight children was a significant public concern, and the Ministry of Education introduced the School Food and Beverage Policy in 2010 as part of its Healthy Schools Strategy, which includes policies governing nutritional requirements of food and drinks sold in schools and a curriculum requirement that all elementary students get 20 minutes of daily physical activity.

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

- Neither the Ministry nor school boards effectively monitor the Healthy Schools Strategy to ensure that it is on track. Even if food choices at cafeterias appear to be healthier than before, none of the school boards that were visited had reviewed the food and drinks sold in their cafeterias to ensure they met the School Food and Beverage Policy's specific nutrition standards.
- A review of sample menu items at one school board identified a significant number that did not meet the Policy's nutrition criteria, including some that deviated significantly. For example, a soup contained twice the amount of fat allowed and a side dish exceeded the allowed sodium limit by 40%.
- There is no formal monitoring strategy to ensure students in grades 1 to 8 get 20 minutes of daily physical activity during instruction time. A number of representatives of schools in the three boards visited said students at their schools did not get the required 20 minutes.
- The requirement for exercise at the high-school level set by the Ministry is much lower than it is in some other jurisdictions. In Ontario, students must complete only one credit course in health and physical education during their four years of high school. In Manitoba, students must obtain four such credits to graduate, and in British Columbia, students must participate in at least 150 minutes of physical activity per week.

-30-

For more information, please contact:  
Bonnie Lysyk  
Auditor General  
(416) 327-1326