Value-for-money audit of:

University Intellectual Property

2015 Annual Report, Section 3.14
Background

- Intellectual property refers to creations of the mind such as inventions, literary and artistic works, designs and symbols, and names and images used in commerce.
- Commercialization refers to the process of getting a discovery or invention to market.
- Provincially-funded research generally conducted at universities, not-for-profit research institutions, and research hospitals.
- Total provincial research funding to universities between 2009/10 and 2013/14 was $1.9 billion.
Audit Objective

Assess whether:

- Ministry has co-ordinated and effective processes in place to provide research funding to universities, monitor the use of research funding, and assess the benefits to Ontarians; and

- select universities have effective processes in place to manage intellectual property generated from university research, including identifying, protecting, assessing and commercializing intellectual property.
Overall Conclusions

- Ministry not tracking total research and commercialization funding province-wide
- Ministry has not developed plan to monitor whether it is achieving value for money from its investments in research and innovation
- Ontario does not claim intellectual property rights arising from research that it funds
Specific Findings

- Intellectual property generating little revenue for universities
- Universities unable to ensure that all research discoveries by researchers/inventors who used university resources were disclosed
- Patent protection may not always be taken out on a timely basis at universities, increasing risk that others may obtain a patent based on publicly communicated information about an invention
Ministry should establish processes to track and monitor funding for research and innovation, and any technologies and inventions arising therefrom

Ministry should track funding for basic vs. applied research, and develop appropriate performance measures for each

Ontario should assess the pros and cons of maintaining intellectual property rights (ownership, royalty-free use, and/or income sharing) for funded research
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