



News Release

For Immediate Release

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BETTER OVERSIGHT NEEDED SAYS AUDITOR GENERAL OF ONTARIO

(TORONTO) In his sixth Annual Report, tabled today in the Legislative Assembly, Ontario Auditor General Jim McCarter cited the importance of sufficient oversight to ensure that services to the public are delivered economically, efficiently, and effectively.

McCarter noted that “in a number of our value-for-money audits, we concluded there was insufficient oversight to ensure that Ontarians were getting the public services they need and value for their tax dollars.” The Report cited examples of this lack of oversight affecting the delivery of services by organizations in the broader public sector, including:

- The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care delegated oversight responsibilities for community-based adult mental-health and addiction-treatment agencies to 14 newly created Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs). But McCarter noted that “neither the Ministry nor the LHINs had sufficient information to know whether these agencies were doing their job well and people were getting the treatment services they needed.”
- Special-education funding to schools has increased by 54% over the last six years. But only 5% more kids are being served, and neither the Ministry of Education nor the school boards the Auditor visited had assessed the impact of such a significant increase in funding.
- The Ministry of Children and Youth Services has provided “little direction” to child and youth mental-health agencies as to what kind and level of services they should be providing to their clients. Also, the Ministry did not have the information it would need to make informed funding decisions.

McCarter noted this same lack of oversight in his audits of programs delivered directly by government ministries. “There are critical oversight issues, some of which could affect public safety, that have still not been adequately addressed even though we have raised them before,” he observed. Among them:

- Violations of food-safety standards in provincially regulated slaughterhouses and meat-processing plants need more rigorous follow-up by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.
- The Ministry of Revenue’s current policies, procedures, and information technology are “still inadequate to ensure that the correct amounts of tobacco, gasoline, and diesel-fuel taxes are being declared and paid.” As a result, the province may be short \$500 million a year in uncollected tobacco tax alone.
- The Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services “continues to have a serious problem with absenteeism among correctional officers,” with the average annual number of sick days rising from the 14 reported in the Auditor’s 2002 audit to more than 32 last year.

- Despite increased funding and initiatives by the Ministry of the Attorney General, the backlog in Ontario courts continues to grow and now stands at its highest level in 15 years, with some 106,000 criminal charges pending for more than eight months.

The Auditor's Annual Report includes observations on 14 value-for-money audits conducted over the past year. The report and brief news releases (listed below) for these audits and for the chapter on the province's Public Accounts are available at www.auditor.on.ca:

- Addiction Programs: **"Many Addicts Not Getting Treatment"**
- Adult Institutional Services: **"Jail Costs Rise as Inmate Population Soars"**
- Brampton Civic Hospital Public-Private Partnership Project: **"Lessons to be Learned from P3 Hospital Project"**
- Child and Youth Mental Health: **"Kids' Mental Health System a 'Patchwork'"**
- Commercial Vehicle Safety and Enforcement Program: **"Collision Rates Involving Commercial Vehicles On the Rise"**
- Community Mental Health: **"Community-living Services for Mentally Ill Fall Short"**
- Court Services: **"Court Backlogs Getting Worse"**
- Employment and Training Division: **"Over Half of Apprentices Don't Complete Training"**
- Food Safety: **"Food-safety Measures Need Improvement"**
- Gasoline, Diesel-fuel, and Tobacco Tax: **"Ontario Missing Out on up to \$500 Million a Year"**
- Hospital Board Governance: **"Hospital Boards Becoming More Effective"**
- Ontario Clean Water Agency: **"Clean Water Agency Doing Adequate Job"**
- School Renewal and Maintenance: **"Fine-tuning Needed for Plan to Fix Ontario's Schools"**
- Special Education: **"Special Ed Funding up 54%—Is It Paying Off?"**
- Chapter 2 on Public Accounts: **"Auditor Concerned About Government Legislating Accounting Rules"**

The *2008 Annual Report* also includes a chapter detailing government advertising submitted to the Auditor General's Office for review, as well as one on follow-up reviews of audits done two years ago.

The Office of the Auditor General of Ontario is independent of government and its administration. This independence is an essential safeguard that enables it to fulfill its auditing and reporting responsibilities objectively. The Office provides information and advice that assist the Legislative Assembly in holding the government accountable for its stewardship of public funds.

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