



News Release

For Immediate Release

December 8, 2008

COMMUNITY-LIVING SERVICES FOR MENTALLY ILL FALL SHORT: AUDITOR GENERAL

(TORONTO) Ontarians with serious mental illness living in the community may not be receiving an appropriate level of care, Auditor General Jim McCarter says in his *2008 Annual Report*, released today.

McCarter noted that, while the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has been successful in moving people with serious mental illness out of institutions into the community, “the province does not know whether there are adequate support systems in place to ensure these individuals can lead fulfilling lives in their communities.”

The issue was identified in a value-for-money audit of the Ministry’s Community Mental Health program. The audit noted that since 1976, Ontario policy has been to move away from institutional care, such as psychiatric hospitals, and toward a more effective and less costly system of community-based care.

The Report also noted that:

- Wait times for services other than supportive housing ranged from a minimum of eight weeks to a year or more, with the average being 180 days.
- There was a “critical” shortage of supportive housing units in Ontario, leading to wait times ranging from one to six years. In addition, there was an uneven distribution of units across the province—one region had 20 units per 100,000 of population while another had 273 units per 100,000.
- More than half of community-mental-health service providers have received annual funding increases of about only 1.5% over the last few years, and those the Auditor met with indicated this made it difficult to maintain service levels and retain qualified staff.
- As many as half the people in hospital with mental illness could be discharged into the community if the necessary community services were available.

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For more information, please contact:

Andréa Vanasse/Joel Ruimy
Communications
(416) 327-2336