



News Release

For Immediate Release

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JAIL COSTS RISE AS INMATE POPULATION SOARS: AUDITOR GENERAL

(TORONTO) The number of inmates in custody awaiting court appearances has almost doubled in the past decade and now accounts for nearly 70% of Ontario's jail population, Ontario's Auditor General Jim McCarter says in his *2008 Annual Report*, released today.

In addition, a \$400-million investment to modernize detention facilities over the last decade, intended to significantly reduce the average cost of incarcerating inmates, failed to yield any over-all savings.

"There has been good progress in reducing security incidents, such as escapes, in recent years," McCarter said. "But the goal of significantly reducing incarceration costs hasn't been achieved."

The Report examined the \$575-million-a-year program of the Adult Institutional Services division of the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, which admits an average of 70,000 adults each year into provincial jails, detention centres, and correctional institutions.

The Auditor General found that the \$400 million spent to modernize the jail system was intended to give Ontario "one of the lowest operating costs for correctional institutions in Canada." Instead, this province "still ranks the highest when compared with five other large provinces."

Among the Report's other findings:

- There is a "serious" problem with absenteeism among correctional officers: in 2007, each officer took an average of 32.5 sick days (based on an eight-hour day), which cost the province \$20 million a year in replacement workers and overtime costs.
- The Ministry launched a transformation strategy in the 2004/05 fiscal year designed to eliminate 2,000 beds by 2007/08 and save \$60 million. Instead, no substantial savings were achieved, largely because the system had 1,000 more inmates than when the strategy was introduced.
- Since 2003, the Ministry has aimed to have up to 1,300 offenders serve their sentences in the community at any one time and to use electronic devices to monitor their whereabouts. Instead, fewer than one-third of the target number serve their sentences in this way.

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