



News Release

For Immediate Release

December 6, 2010

MORE WORK NEEDED TO HELP THOSE AWAITING ORGAN DONATIONS: AUDITOR GENERAL

(TORONTO) Ontario has made progress in meeting organ- and tissue-transplant needs, but more could be done to increase the number of available organs and reduce wait times, Auditor General Jim McCarter says in his *2010 Annual Report*, released today.

“The establishment of the Trillium Gift of Life Network in 2002 has proven to be a worthwhile initiative,” McCarter said today. “Another was the photo health-card application process, which specifically asks for consent for organ donation. But more can be done to increase the availability of organs and improve the quality of life for hundreds of Ontarians.”

For the fiscal year ended March 31, 2010, almost 1,000 organ transplants were carried out by eight hospitals in Ontario, but more than 1,600 people were still waiting for an organ transplant. The Trillium Gift of Life Network, an agency of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, co-ordinates donations of organs and tissue, as well as certain transplant-related activities, such as wait-list management. Ministry funding to the Network and to hospitals for transplants in the 2009/10 fiscal year was about \$100 million.

Some of the Auditor’s more significant findings were:

- The Trillium Gift of Life Network has the power to require hospitals equipped with mechanical ventilators, which can keep a patient’s organs alive until a transplant can be arranged, to notify the Network of the death or imminent death of patients on ventilators. However, the Network currently requires only 21 of the 61 hospitals equipped with ventilators to issue such notifications, which are essential to start the assessment and consent process for a transplant.
- In more than 40% of the cases reviewed by the Auditor, organs were not allocated to the highest-priority recipient, with no documentation to explain why.
- Wait times for some organs varied significantly depending on the region. In 2009/10, for example, 90% of people on a wait-list in one region received a kidney within four years, compared to nine years in two other regions.
- For years, many Ontarians have signed the donor-consent cards that came with their driver’s licences and kept them in their wallets. However, wallets are rarely with patients at the time organ donation is being considered. As well, the Ministry has no way of tracking people who have signed the cards because this is not logged on its registry of potential donors.

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