



News Release

For Immediate Release

December 6, 2010

AUDITOR GENERAL CITES MINISTRIES FOR AD-REVIEW OFFENCES

(TORONTO) While the vast majority of advertising submissions sent to the Auditor General in 2009/10 were approved to run, the Finance and Revenue ministries were cited for violations or contraventions of the *Government Advertising Act* in the *2010 Annual Report* of the Auditor General of Ontario.

The ministries of Revenue and Finance each submitted ads about the Harmonized Sales Tax (HST) in advance of the tax taking effect last July 1. Auditor General Jim McCarter ruled the ads violated the Act because they had as a “primary objective” the promotion of the “partisan political interests of the governing party.” The ruling meant the ministries could not run these ads.

New and revised HST ads were subsequently submitted that won the Auditor’s approval.

In the past year, the Auditor General also advised the Ministry of Infrastructure that it may have been in contravention of the Act for not having submitted for review thousands of outdoor billboards erected at construction sites that had received funding from the joint federal–provincial stimulus plan. The Ministry said it did not think the signs qualified as billboards under the Act but later indicated it would in future submit such signs for review and approval.

The Act, which took effect in 2005, requires government offices to submit proposed TV, radio, print, and outdoor advertising, as well as bulk mail, to the Auditor General for review. Internet advertising is exempt from the Act.

The Act stipulates that the Auditor must review the ads to ensure they are non-partisan and meet certain specified standards. The Office then has seven business days to assess the proposed ads and either issue an approval or cite the government office for a violation.

In the 2009/10 fiscal year, the Auditor General’s Office reviewed 600 ads worth more than \$40 million.

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