



News Release

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ATTORNEY GENERAL NEEDS TO BETTER OVERSEE PROSECUTION SERVICE: AUDITOR GENERAL

(TORONTO) Ontario's Crown prosecution service lags behind those other Canadian jurisdictions that have set up electronic systems to manage cases and track how resources are used to prosecute those cases, Auditor General Jim McCarter says in his *2012 Annual Report*.

"The number of Crown attorneys and staffing costs have more than doubled since our last audit of the Criminal Law Division in 1993, but the total number of criminal charges Crown attorneys handle in a year has barely changed at all," McCarter said today after the Report was released. "While the Ministry of the Attorney General indicates that cases require more time today, they have little underlying information to assess Crown attorneys' workloads or the way cases are being handled across the province."

Manitoba, British Columbia and the federal government are among the jurisdictions that have moved to electronic systems to manage and track cases and prosecution resources. The \$7.9-million project undertaken by the Ministry's Criminal Law Division to implement an electronic case management system—the Crown Management Information System—was to be completed by March 2010, but continues to be plagued by delays.

Following are some of the Auditor General's other significant findings:

- The Division relies almost entirely on informal oversight by senior staff at the 54 regional Crown attorney offices and does not use information that is available to analyze prosecutors' workloads and their effectiveness. Our Office made the same observation 20 years ago. Practices and workloads varied significantly among local offices and between regions—572 charges handled per Crown attorney at one office and 1,726 at another, for example. As well, it costs \$437 on average to prosecute a charge in Toronto, compared to \$268 in the rest of the province, but little analysis had been done on such differences.
- Ontario had Canada's highest rate of adult criminal charges withdrawn or stayed (suspended by a court) in 2010/11 (43% for Ontario versus 26% for the rest of Canada) and the lowest rate of guilty verdicts (56% for Ontario versus 69% for the rest of Canada)—but the Division does not have the information needed to determine the reasons for this.

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