



News Release

For Immediate Release

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Ontario Did Not Have Enough PPE When COVID-19 Hit Because it Ignored Warnings to Be Prepared: Auditor General

TORONTO – If the province had paid attention to a plan developed in 2006, Ontario would have initially had enough personal protective equipment when COVID-19 arrived 14 years later, said Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk in her audit report on Personal Protective Equipment.

The Ontario Health Plan for an Influenza Pandemic was developed with advice from the SARS Commission's Final Report, but the province did not pay enough attention to it.

“An inadequate supply of PPE contributed to a higher risk of COVID-19 exposure for many health-care workers,” said Lysyk. “When they were left unprotected, all Ontarians were affected.”

There were more than 1,600 emergency requests for PPE from health-care facilities between February 5 and March 18, 2020. That was far more than could be filled. Although the Ontario Health Plan for an Influenza Pandemic recommended that health providers maintain a four-week supply of PPE, the Ministry of Health did not know if health-care providers such as long-term-care homes, maintained an emergency PPE supply. In the provincial emergency stockpile of PPE more than 80% had expired by 2017. The Ministry of Health had begun destroying the PPE without replacing it.

In November 2020, the province established Supply Ontario to centralize and manage the province's procurement and supply chain, including PPE. It is not expected to be fully functional until November 2023.

“The government's Supply Ontario initiative, along with implementation of our recommendations, should address the issues we observed,” said Lysyk. “It is important that province be prepared for unexpected events where PPE may be needed.”

The audit report contains eight recommendations for improvement.

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Read the report at www.auditor.on.ca

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