



News Release

For Immediate Release

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Ontario's Bridges Meet Provincial Safety Standard, But Bridge Inspections Need Improvement: Auditor General

(Toronto) Ontarians can feel safe when they travel across provincial highway bridges, says Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk in her *2021 Annual Report*.

Of the approximately 3,000 bridges the Ministry of Transportation is responsible for inspecting and repairing, 89% were assessed to be in good condition, exceeding the province's goal of 85% of bridges being in good condition at all times. As well, 10% of bridges were assessed to be in fair condition and 1% of bridges were assessed to be in poor condition. "Poor condition" does not raise a safety concern, but indicates that capital maintenance to the bridge is needed within a year.

"Confidence in our bridge infrastructure is not misplaced," said Lysyk. "But inspection systems can be improved and we would then have better plans for future capital improvements."

The report found some inspectors perform six or more inspections per day, contrary to the Ontario Structure Inspection Manual (OSIM). The OSIM says an inspector should plan to spend two to three hours on a typical bridge site in order to have enough time to adequately assess the condition of all elements. The Ministry has not tried to discover how some inspectors can complete so many inspections in a day.

Ontario's bridge inspection manual uses vague descriptions to measure bridge deterioration, and it leaves inspectors to make subjective assessments, which can ultimately impact maintenance decisions and capital planning. Technology that can give inspectors a better look at parts of a bridge that are hard to reach, and that can reduce costs, is not being used to best effect. As well, the Ministry does not follow up to confirm that its regional offices are following its recommendations or doing maintenance and repair work in a timely manner.

"While the state of the province's bridges is good, many were built in the 1960s with a design life of 50 years," said Lysyk. "Assuring proper inspection of those bridges is now critical."

The audit report contains 10 recommendations for improvement.

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Read the report at www.auditor.on.ca

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