



News Release

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Metro Toronto and Ottawa Convention Centres Focused on Profitable Events Instead of Those with Most Economic Benefits for Regions

(TORONTO) Both the Metro Toronto Convention Centre (MTCC) and the Ottawa Convention Centre (OCC) are profit-driven in their decision-making, and not primarily focused on attracting events to maximize economic benefit to surrounding regions, Acting Auditor General Nick Stavropoulos said today.

“Government-operated convention centres are generally meant to be drivers of positive economic impact in their communities, and it is important they stay focused on this goal,” said Stavropoulos.

These regions could have benefited from millions of dollars in potential economic impact associated with hosting additional events, but the centres focused on their individual profitability. Since 2018, centres had collectively lost the opportunity to host 19 events (15 at OCC and four at MTCC), which could have brought an estimated \$52 million in economic impact to the regions, because the centres had set their bid price too high in efforts to achieve greater profitability. The focus on profit is contrary to the approach taken by other convention centres with similar mandates across Canada.

While convention centre clients are satisfied with the service they received during past events, bookings for conventions are down by about 50 per cent compared to pre-pandemic levels for MTCC and OCC combined.

The audit found there are also outside factors impacting bookings. For example, MTCC faces challenges hosting large-scale conventions due to hotel room shortages. OCC faces similar challenges because flights into Ottawa are limited, a situation that has worsened post-COVID-19 pandemic.

“The Ministry should work with convention centres to clarify their mandates and determine how to best generate economic benefits for the province,” said Stavropoulos.

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