



# News Release

For Immediate Release

December 6, 2023

## **Ontario Science Centre Relocation Decision Not Fully Informed and Made Without Needed Consultation or a Clear Plan for the Existing Site**

(TORONTO) Both of Ontario's science centres — the Ontario Science Centre in Toronto and Science North in Sudbury — are struggling with financial sustainability issues and declining attendance. As well, the government made decisions about the Ontario Science Centre's move to Ontario Place with preliminary and incomplete cost information, and insufficient input from key stakeholders, Acting Auditor General Nick Stavropoulos said today.

“The province's science centres are both facing their own challenges,” said Stavropoulos. “But decision-makers were not fully informed when planning for the future of the Ontario Science Centre — this is critically important for all decisions going forward.”

Although the Province has been assessing the Ontario Science Centre's move to Ontario Place since 2016, information provided to support the decision did not include a complete list of costs for a detailed comparison of relocating versus remaining at the same location. For example, financing, transaction and legal costs for the construction of the new science centre projected under the public-private partnership (P3) model, or similar costs associated with staying at the current location, were not included. Incremental parking costs for the relocation were also not included.

The audit also found that consultations with key stakeholders, such as the centre's landowners, were lacking, the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority was not consulted, and discussions with the City of Toronto were limited. Large school boards within the Greater Toronto Area that would be directly impacted were also not consulted. Elementary and high school students make up 25 per cent of the centre's attendees.

The Ontario Science Centre's current facility requires \$370 million in deferred maintenance and repairs. In addition, the pedestrian bridge connecting the main entrance to exhibits is now closed due to major structural problems. In fiscal 2022/23, the centre had spent \$2.4 million to shuttle visitors by bus from the parking lot to an alternative entrance, seriously impacting visitor experience.

Science North embarked on a costly expansion plan that was not backed up by sound financial planning and other key information. For example, the cost of its model mine project ballooned from \$5 million in 2020 to \$15 million by 2023 due to excavation and construction cost increases resulting primarily from poor project management.

“Science centres are vitally important to spark interest in scientific discovery and also for the positive impacts scientific knowledge can provide for Ontario and its economy. To ensure Ontario is well placed to benefit, key decisions about these facilities should be made with the best information possible,” said Stavropoulos.



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