



News Release

For Immediate Release

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LITERACY SECRETARIAT NOT EFFECTIVELY TARGETING ITS SPENDING: AUDITOR GENERAL

The amount of funding that Ontario's Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat provides to school boards to boost student achievement is not always based on need or an assessment of program effectiveness, Auditor General Jim McCarter says in his *2009 Annual Report*, released today.

"Funding was not always allocated to school boards with the greatest need," McCarter said. "For example, the board with the greatest number of schools designated as low-performing was receiving just \$17 per student under a major Secretariat program, while several other boards with no designated low-performing schools received more than double this amount per student."

The Secretariat was established under the province's Ministry of Education in November 2004 to help Ontario's 72 school boards improve the achievement of children from junior kindergarten to grade 6, as measured by testing performed by the Education Quality and Accountability Office.

Since its establishment five years ago, the Secretariat has spent \$340 million, with about 85% of that going to school boards to help them meet student-achievement targets.

Among the other findings in the Annual Report:

- The Auditor acknowledged that the Ministry has made good progress in recent years in improving overall student achievement but noted that assessment of the effectiveness of secretariat programs has been limited, so the Secretariat does not know which of its initiatives are most effective.
- School boards have not provided the Secretariat with enough information to know that its funds have been spent appropriately, and to track their impact on student outcomes. The window of opportunity to help improve student achievement closes after students reach the age of 12, so it is important for the Secretariat to know which programs work best and which should be changed or eliminated.
- The Secretariat uses certain school boards as "bankers" to distribute funds to third parties or other school boards. The Auditor questioned the need for such arrangements and noted that there is no agreement between the Secretariat and these boards outlining respective roles and responsibilities or accountability relationships. Also, the Secretariat paid these "banker boards" administrative fees that in some cases appeared excessive.

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For more information, please contact:

Jim McCarter
Auditor General
(416) 327-1326

Andréa Vanasse/Joel Ruimy
Communications
(416) 327-2336