



News Release

For Immediate Release

December 10, 2013

PROGRAMS NEED TO ENSURE COST-EFFECTIVE USE OF SCARCE PUBLIC RESOURCES, SAYS AUDITOR GENERAL IN 2013 ANNUAL REPORT

(TORONTO) Bonnie Lysyk, Auditor General of Ontario, released her *2013 Annual Report* today. This is the first Annual Report she has issued since taking office on September 3, 2013.

The report includes 10 value-for-money audits on a wide range of topics of importance to the Legislature and Ontario taxpayers. Some themes Lysyk highlighted in this year's audits were:

Obtaining Full Value From Programs Focused on Helping Vulnerable People

- In **Autism Services and Supports for Children**, the Auditor noted that the Ministry of Children and Youth Services spent \$180 million last year on a variety of autism services and supports for children under age 18 and their families, but more children with autism are waiting for government-funded services than are receiving them. It can take three to 12 months for a diagnosis of autism and most children then have an even longer wait (up to four years) to begin treatment. As well, the province's primary method of therapy is not being offered to the children for whom research indicates it would likely make the most difference. The Ministry needs to re-evaluate its program design to ensure it maximizes outcomes for all children served and determine what can be done to reduce the wait list.
- In **Violence Against Women**, the Auditor noted that the Ministry of Community and Social Services does not have enough information to properly assess the effectiveness of the programs and services offered to abused women and their children, and therefore to know whether the services meet their needs.

Improving Co-ordination for Cost-effective Service Delivery

- In **Healthy Schools Strategy**, the Auditor noted that the Ministry of Education needs to better integrate its activities with other ministries to ensure that provincial policies and resources devoted to encouraging healthy eating are being implemented effectively across the province. The Ministry also needs to ensure that elementary students are getting the required 20 minutes of daily physical activity during instruction time.
- In **Rehabilitation Services at Hospitals**, the Auditor noted that to reduce variable access to services, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care needs to work with the Local Health Integration Networks and service providers to establish a cost-effective, province-wide co-ordinated system for short- and long-term hospital rehabilitation services, along with community-based outpatient services.

Meeting Public Expectations

- In **Land Ambulance Services**, the Auditor noted that the public expects ambulances to arrive quickly and the patient to be stabilized and transported to hospital promptly. There is currently no patient-centred measure and analysis of the time from receipt of an ambulance call to the time an ambulance arrives at a patient's location. Value for the significant funding increases in recent years is therefore hard to assess.

- In **Provincial Parks**, the Auditor noted that the public expects that provincial parks be well maintained and that the wildlife and natural surroundings be protected for everyone's enjoyment now and in the future. Growth of parks and expanded responsibilities under the *Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, 2006* have challenged the Ministry of Natural Resources to meet its legislated mandate to protect Ontario's park system and provide opportunities for ecologically sustainable recreation.
- In **Health Human Resources**, the Auditor noted that the public expectation is that there be the right number, mix and distribution of physicians in place across the province to meet the population's current and future needs. However, despite increases in physicians and nurses in recent years, Ontario has not yet met that expectation. For example, many specialists funded and trained in Ontario do not obtain employment here, yet there are wait lists for the surgeries these specialists are trained to perform.
- In **Ontario Power Generation (OPG) Human Resources**, the Auditor noted that the public expectation that ratepayers pay a reasonable price for electricity and that the generator manage its human resources and costs appropriately so that they do not negatively affect the price of electricity is not being met. There are several areas where OPG needs to strengthen its human resource practices and reduce costs.

Increasing Public Awareness

- In **ServiceOntario**, the Auditor noted that an effective strategy that includes heightening public awareness of ServiceOntario's online services may assist ServiceOntario in increasing utilization of its less costly online services. Meeting customer expectations will also involve reducing transaction errors, improving client wait times at peak periods at in-person centres, and improving client satisfaction with telephone service times.
- In **Private Schools**, the Auditor noted that the public should know that the Ministry of Education provides only limited oversight over private schools. These schools are not required to hire teachers certified by the Ontario College of Teachers, obtain criminal background checks on staff or follow the Ontario curriculum (unless they offer credits toward the Ontario Secondary School Diploma).

In its section on the government's financial statements and the province's financial condition, the Report noted that the government will need to continuously monitor and take action to manage its debt in a sustainable manner, given recent and expected increases in debt levels.

The *2013 Annual Report* also includes follow-ups on the status of recommendations made in the *2011 Annual Report* and a chapter on the Office's government advertising review work.

In addition to the Annual Report, the Office of the Auditor General delivered two special audits this year—*Mississauga Power Plant Cancellation Costs* and *Oakville Power Plant Cancellation Costs*. A third special audit—on the divestment of the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission—is also being tabled today.

For more information, please contact:
Bonnie Lysyk
Auditor General
(416) 327-1326