



News Release

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Auditor General: Better Co-ordination of Indigenous Programs Needed

(TORONTO) The Ministry of Indigenous Affairs needs to get a better handle on the provincial programs and services available for the 375,000 Indigenous people in Ontario, Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk says in her *2020 Annual Report* released today.

Each provincial ministry independently designs and implements its own Indigenous policy initiatives according to its own priorities.

There are currently 140 provincial programs designed to benefit Indigenous people. However, the Indigenous Affairs Ministry only posts 11 on its website and could only provide a list of 30 programs when requested. This shows that the Ministry was not familiar with many of the Indigenous programs being offered by other ministries.

“The problems with this decentralized approach are compounded by the absence of oversight,” stated Ms. Lysyk. “The Ministry does not track or monitor the effectiveness of these programs and services at a time when there are considerable social and economic disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Ontario.”

The Auditor General’s Report did point out that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry led the province’s efforts by meeting with Indigenous communities and service providers to get a more comprehensive understanding of their needs. Those needs were relayed to the responsible ministries with the Ministry co-ordinating the government’s response.

Finally, the Report says the lack of broadband access for Indigenous communities is limiting health, social and economic progress. Only 17% of households on First Nations reserves have access to basic Internet services, impacting people’s access to services like eHealth, online learning, and eCommerce opportunities for Indigenous businesses.

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Read the report at www.auditor.on.ca

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Background and Other Findings:

- According to the last census in 2016, 22% of Canada's Indigenous population lived in Ontario. There are nearly 375,000 Indigenous Peoples in Ontario, accounting for 3% of Ontario's population. About 15% of Indigenous Peoples live on reserves.
- The Report found that Indigenous Peoples have, in general, poorer health, education, social and economic outcomes than non-Indigenous people and that many First Nations reserves are still under some type of drinking water advisory.
- Only 17% of households on First Nations reserves have access to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) standard for basic Internet services compared to 98.8% in medium and large municipalities and 29.5% in rural Ontario.
- Ministries do not have accountability measures in place to confirm funding for Indigenous programs and services is being used as intended. Of the 18 programs and services sampled, only two filed any supporting documents, such as invoices or receipts, to show that funds were being used as intended. These programs and services accounted for 3% or \$400 million of \$1.2 billion in budgeted expenditures for Indigenous programs in 2019/20.
- Ministries do not have adequate performance measures in place to ensure Indigenous programs and services are effective in meeting the needs of Indigenous people. The audit found that 12 of the 18 programs sampled did not have performance measures. Of the six programs that did have performance measures in place, three were not able to effectively measure whether the program was achieving its intended outcome.
- The Ministry of Indigenous Affairs does not effectively manage its land claims settlement process in an accountable manner and does not establish expected timelines, milestones or costs for the settlement of land claims. The 19 land claims we reviewed that the province had concluded took, on average, 22 years to settle.