



# News Release

For Immediate Release

November 30, 2022

## COVID-19 Contracts Were Timely Given the Urgency of the Pandemic, but Better Co-ordination Could Have Reduced Costs: Auditor General

(Toronto) COVID-19-related procurements were generally conducted appropriately Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk says in her *2022 Annual Report*. “Our audit found that the speedy procurements were generally justified by the urgent need during the pandemic,” said Lysyk. “But we identified contracts that could have been better managed with more co-ordination.”

Ontario could have run COVID-19 mobile testing clinics more effectively or at less cost, had there been co-ordination between the entities that contracted for them. Both Ontario Health and the Ministry of Education contracted with vendors to operate COVID-19 mobile testing clinics in 2021, but did not co-ordinate on either the rates to pay or on clinic locations.

Private companies were paid over \$32 million by Ontario Health and the Ministry of Education for mobile COVID-19 testing clinics. If there was better co-ordination, over \$18 million that was paid for underutilized mobile testing capacity could have been saved by the Province or more people could have been tested at these clinics. For example, the Ministry of Education’s mobile testing clinics operated between January 2021 and June 2021 on a walk-in basis, and only tested between 2% and 7% of the people that they had the capacity to test.

The audit also identified that a total of \$66 million of personal protective equipment (PPE) expired, was damaged or became obsolete and required disposal in 2021/22. Further planning is needed to avoid similar waste in the future related to over 100 million N95 respirators (worth over \$81 million) that will expire by 2030 if demand for these masks does not increase.

The audit report contains 12 recommendations for improvement.

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