

Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING DIVISION
(Section 3.08, 2008 Annual Report of the Auditor General of Ontario)

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The Honourable Steve Peters, MPP
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly

Sir,

Your Standing Committee on Public Accounts has the honour to present its Report and commends it to the House.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Norm. Sterling".

Norman W. Sterling, MPP
Chair

Queen's Park
January 2010

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

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1st Session, 39th Parliament

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LIST OF CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

LAURA ALBANESE was replaced by DAVID RAMSAY on September 15, 2009.

ERNIE HARDEMAN was replaced by TED ARNOTT on September 15, 2009.

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PREAMBLE

In May 2009 the Standing Committee on Public Accounts held public hearings on the Auditor General's audit report on the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities' (Ministry's) Employment and Training Division (section 3.08 of the Auditor General's *2008 Annual Report*). During the hearings, senior officials from the Ministry appeared before the Committee.* In this report the Committee summarizes and endorses the Auditor's findings and recommendations, and presents the Committee's findings, views, and recommendations. The Committee requests that the Ministry provide the Committee Clerk with a written response to each of the Committee's recommendations within 120 calendar days of the tabling of the report with the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, unless otherwise specified in a recommendation.

Acknowledgments

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts extends its appreciation to officials from the Ministry for their attendance at the hearings. The Committee also acknowledges the assistance provided during the hearings and report writing deliberations by the Office of the Auditor General, the Clerk of the Committee, and staff in the Legislative Research Service.

INTRODUCTION

The governments of Canada and Ontario signed the Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA) in November 2005. The agreement took effect in January 2007. Since then, the Ministry's Employment and Training Division (hereinafter called Division) has been integrating employment and training services formerly provided by the federal government to provide a one-stop training and employment system. The integrated network is called Employment Ontario. The Division spends more than \$900 million annually on Employment Ontario programs and services.

OVERVIEW

The Ministry is now responsible for administering federal programs that are referred to as the Ontario Employment Benefits and Support Measures (EBSMs). Canada provided more than \$529 million in 2007-08 for EBSM programs designed to help people eligible for Employment Insurance (EI) or people who are unemployed. It also provided \$53 million for administrative costs and committed to provide \$25 million over three years to develop new information systems. EBSM expenditures in 2007-08 totaled \$585 million.

The Auditor focused on the following two Division programs that existed before the signing of the LMDA:

- Apprenticeship Training; and

* For a transcript of the proceedings, see Committee *Hansard*, May 13, 2009.

- Literacy and Basic Skills.

The Auditor also focused on the following two federal programs now under the Division:

- Skills Development Program; and
- Self-Employment Benefit Program.

These four programs represent \$412 million (about 48%) of the Division's expenditures.

OBJECTIVE OF THE AUDITOR'S AUDIT

The audit objective was to assess whether the Ministry had adequate systems, processes, and procedures in place for managing these programs to:

- ensure that services are being delivered in accordance with legislative and policy requirements;
- ensure that the Ministry and its delivery agencies are providing programs and services to clients in an economical and efficient manner; and
- measure and report whether the programs are meeting their objectives.

In 2002 the Auditor conducted an audit of the Apprenticeship and Literacy and Basic Skills programs.

ISSUES RAISED IN THE AUDIT AND BEFORE THE COMMITTEE

Significant issues were raised by the audit and before the Committee. The Committee attaches particular importance to those issues discussed below.

Apprenticeship Program

Developments in the Apprenticeship Program since the Last Audit and Tracking Completion Rates

The Auditor cited apprenticeship training figures that were current as of June 2008 and compared them with figures for the 2001-02 fiscal year. He noted a 25% increase in apprenticeship training expenditures (\$81 million to \$101 million) and that the number of registered apprentices had more than doubled (52,000 to 109,000).

The Auditor said that the Ministry needs to obtain information on apprenticeship completion and employment rates in relation to labour market demand. The Ministry had agreed to implement outcome-based measures by January 2004 and thereafter to report publicly on achievements. To date the Ministry has only publicly reported on the number of annual apprenticeship registrations. The Auditor recommended that the Ministry should measure and track apprentice

completion and employment rates using methods that permit comparisons among trades and over time and should also benchmark against other jurisdictions. The Auditor also recommended that the Ministry should periodically assess why apprentices fail to complete their training and develop appropriate strategies to address this.

Apprenticeship Statistics for 2008-09 Fiscal Year

The Ministry updated the Committee on apprenticeship training figures for the 2008-09 fiscal year. The Ministry said that despite challenges related to the economic downturn it met targets for registering apprentices in 2008-09 and registrations increased by 7% in comparison with the prior year. In Ontario there were 120,000 apprentices learning a trade – double the number registered in the 2002-03 fiscal year. Registrations in the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program increased to 25,000 from about 23,000 in 2005-06. There are over 154 trades in the Ontario apprenticeship system.

Tracking Completion Rates

The Ministry noted complexities in tracking completion rates but did indicate that about 50% of those registered are actually completing their apprenticeships and becoming certified. Between fiscal years 2002-03 to 2008-09, the Ministry issued 80,000 certificates. Completion rates are higher in the restricted trades, which comprise about 50% of those working in the trades.

The Ministry is participating in a national (federal, provincial and territorial) apprenticeship survey. The study will yield comprehensive data on apprenticeship outcomes. The disaggregated data for Ontario will provide the Ministry with information on reasons for non-completion, which will help target its efforts to support higher rates of completion. The Ministry is also “scoping out” its own research project to obtain good data on such factors as completions, and supply and demand. It will encourage apprentices to focus their efforts on those trades most likely to lead to full-time employment. The Ministry also said that it is evaluating the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program to ensure that the program meets its objectives in supporting young people entering the trades.

Defining Completion and Employment Ontario Information System

The Ministry will be using the national apprenticeship survey definition of completion and said now that all jurisdictions will use this same definition, it will be possible to obtain better relative data and a better understanding of reasons why apprentices do not complete their training. In the past, jurisdictions have assessed non-completion differently; apprentices may leave training programs for a variety of reasons. This has posed questions regarding the definition for completion. For example, if an individual chose to leave one apprenticeship training program for another one, should that individual be considered a non-completer? Or, if an individual discontinued a training program in a voluntary trade, where certification was not required, but the individual continued to work in that trade, does this count as a non-completion?

The Ministry said completion entails that an individual

- complete all in-school training;
- finish the on-the-job training component; and
- in most cases, write and pass a certification exam (not all trades require this).

The Committee noted that the Ministry previously committed to implementing outcome-based measures on apprenticeship completion and employment rates in relation to labour-market demand by January 2004. The Committee wanted to know why it has taken so long to determine the definition of completion.

The Ministry replied that the key issue is having a robust data information system in place. It said that appropriate tracking systems are required in order to be able to report on the completion rate. The Ministry is now developing an information tracking system called the Employment Ontario Information System, which will track apprentices through various stages of training through to receipt of certification. The system will be modular. The Ministry already has the contract management module and is adding the case management module. It said that the system is going to provide the Ministry with detailed information.

Committee Recommendations

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts recommends that:

- 1. Within three months of the end of the 2009-10 fiscal year, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities shall provide the Standing Committee on Public Accounts with data on the number of registrations and completions for each trade in the Apprenticeship Program for 2009-10.**
- 2. The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities shall provide the Standing Committee on Public Accounts with a status report on the implementation of the Employment Ontario Information System, explaining how the system is helping the Ministry track accurate completion rates and providing a timeline for when the system will be fully implemented.**

Ministry Undertakings to Encourage Completions

The Ministry said that its employment and training consultants counsel apprentices who may be potentially eligible to complete, to try to support them in moving forward to completion. The consultants support apprentices in a number of ways, including the following:

- by providing study guides and individual counselling;
- by discussing areas of weakness or areas requiring improvement; and

- by arranging extended time and/or a private room (if distraction is an issue) for writing an exam and for an interpreter/translator, as required.

Apprentices are encouraged to write their certificate of qualification exam as soon as possible after completing their apprenticeship program. The Ministry will, in the future, be able to assess whether these types of measures are improving the pass rates through the Employment Ontario Information System.

The Ministry is examining such measures as accelerated in-school training for laid-off apprentices. It has also undertaken some research with individual apprentices to learn reasons for non-completion. *Understanding Apprenticeship Non-Completion: A Survey of Current Apprentices*, a report prepared by the Peel-Halton-Dufferin Training Board in conjunction with the Ministry, Sheridan College and Humber College, was published in March 2009.

Supplementary Information

Understanding Apprenticeship Non-Completion states that

no contact was permitted with apprentices who had already withdrawn from their programs. Therefore, their reasons for withdrawal had to be gathered through indirect contact with current apprentices.

The report contains the following conclusions:

- Increased financial support for apprentices is needed.
- Employers benefited even while apprentices remained apprentices.
- The news is not all bad (twenty-five percent of respondents reported no problems when asked what problems they were having in attending school and several respondents highly praised their programs).

Federal Apprenticeship Incentive Grant

Service Canada and the Ministry sent letters to all apprentices to ensure that they were aware of an apprenticeship incentive grant that is offered by the federal government. Under the grant, apprentices receive money for finishing programs. The goal is for them to complete both their in-school and on-the-job training.

Committee Recommendation

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts recommends that:

- 3. The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities shall provide the Standing Committee on Public Accounts with a status report on measures that the Ministry is undertaking to increase the percentage of those registered in an apprenticeship program that actually complete the program. The Ministry shall also provide the Committee**

with an update on its most recent research into the causes of non-completions.

NOTE

The Committee wishes to notify the Ministry that in one year's time from the tabling of the Committee report on section 3.08, it will request the Ministry to participate in follow-up hearings with the Committee. The purpose of the follow-up hearings will primarily be to discuss the Ministry's progress on both accurately measuring and increasing the rate of those registered in an apprenticeship program that actually complete the program.

Monitoring Program Quality and Compliance

The Auditor noted concerns voiced by employment and training consultants who felt that there was too much emphasis on quantity, as opposed to quality, with regards to meeting apprenticeship registration targets. Consultants said that the increase in caseloads had eliminated time to work with existing apprentices or employers. The Auditor noted that the number of consultants (100) had remained constant since the 2002 audit while caseloads had nearly doubled, averaging 900 to 1,000 apprentices per consultant. The Auditor recommended that the Ministry should review its resource requirements in field offices and its caseloads to enable training consultants to conduct sufficient and timely site visits to employers and in-school training providers and to better support their apprentices.

The Ministry noted that it had hired an additional 20 employment and training consultants by the end of fiscal year 2008-09. It is moving towards a "one-stop shopping" model for clients who are trying to access employment and training services. The consultants will be broadly skilled so that they are able to support a variety of employment and training programs. The Ministry said that its employment service providers are expected to assist individuals interested in going into the trades in finding employers who would be willing to take them on as apprentices.

Ontario College of Trades

The Ministry provided details on the Ontario College of Trades.¹ It said the College will provide the government with a forum to raise, discuss and resolve issues with all participants in the apprenticeship training system. The Ministry believes that some (including parents) have not viewed the trades as having as high a profile as deserved and that the College will attract new apprentices to the trades and will bestow on the trades a professional status similar to that of teachers, health professionals or engineers. (The Ministry does have a number of

¹ Legislation to create the College (Bill 183, the *Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, 2009*) received Royal Assent on October 28, 2009. The College will be implemented in phases and will become fully operational in 2012.

measures currently in place to promote the skilled trades, including the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program.)

In addition to promoting careers in the trades, the Ministry said establishing the College will help to

- make it easier to attract and certify internationally trained workers;
- conduct research;
- make sure that training priorities are focusing on the needs for the future of high-demand trades; and
- give the skilled trades sector ownership.

There are numerous specific objectives for the College including the following (please see *Hansard* for the full list cited by the Ministry):

- to regulate the practice of trades;
- to govern the members of the College;
- to issue certificates of qualification and statements of membership to members of the College and renew, amend, suspend, cancel, revoke or reinstate those certificates and statements as appropriate;
- to establish apprenticeship programs and other training programs for trades including training standards, curriculum standards and examinations;
- to maintain a public register of its members (the Ministry currently registers apprentices and journeypersons; the College will take over the registration process when the apprentice becomes certified as a journeyperson); and
- to determine appropriate journeyperson-to-apprenticeship ratios for trades subject to ratios.

With respect to the latter point, the Ministry said that the College will engage employers, apprentices, journeypersons and others in determining the appropriate ratios. The Committee expressed concern that the current high ratio of three journeypersons per apprentice (3:1), as opposed to a lower 1:1 ratio that exists elsewhere, is making it difficult for those in Ontario who want to become apprentices to secure placements.

Committee Recommendation

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts recommends that:

- 4. The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities shall report back to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts by the end of 2010 on the results of the Ontario College of Trades' review of the appropriate journeyperson-to-apprentice ratios.**

Ontario College of Trades, Continued

According to the Ministry, the College will be an industry-driven, self-regulatory body that will protect the public through, for example, its public registry of members and its role in receiving and investigating complaints. It will be able to deal with issues of discipline, misconduct, incompetence and incapacity.

The community colleges and the non-community college training delivery agents, such as union training centres, will continue to provide the in-school portion of apprenticeship training. The Ministry will work in partnership with the College to identify where in-school training needs to be provided in order to ensure good access to training.

The board of governors will comprise 21 individuals, four from each of the four sectors (service, industrial, automotive and construction) within the apprenticeship system as well as four laypersons who represent the public and one community college representative. The College will have divisional boards, with four of the divisional boards representing the four sectors. The boards will deal with issues specific to the sectors. As noted earlier, the College will take over responsibilities for the certification of journeypersons. The Ministry will continue to be responsible for such key functions as apprenticeship registration and support, and the allocation of funding to training delivery agents. It will also retain its training consultants to help meet these responsibilities.

Addressing Skill Shortages: Labour Market Needs

The Auditor noted that the Ministry has added 20 new apprenticeship trades over the past five years to bring the total to 153 (now 154) in the four sectors. The largest increase has been in the service trades. The expansion has helped meet labour market needs in some areas but has not addressed the skilled worker shortage for plumbers, industrial and construction electricians, and others. The Auditor recommended that the Ministry should develop strategies to attract apprentices to high-demand trades and to help them complete their training.

The Ministry noted that 63% of all the new registrants in 2008-09 were in the top ten trades. Those trades are as follows:

1. automotive sector technician;
2. electrician – construction and maintenance;
3. hairstylist;
4. carpenter;
5. cook;
6. early childhood educator;
7. industrial mechanic/millwright;
8. plumber;
9. information technology contact centre – customer care agent; and
10. truck and coach technician.

The Ministry said that it works closely with training delivery agents on the issue of demand for particular trades. The Ministry tries to use labour market information on high-demand trades to influence people to enter those trades. Apprenticeship surveys assist in matching supply and demand. Ministry staff also works closely with local employers to ascertain community need and to encourage apprentices to fill these positions.

Many Ontario trades people are part of the red seal trades, a nationally recognized standard. The Ministry said that the *Ontario Labour Mobility Act, 2009* is intended to ensure that Canadian trades people are able to move from one province or territory to another without lowering standards across jurisdictions. At the same time, the Ministry said that it will support skills development in high-demand areas which should help keep Ontarians in Ontario. The Ministry anticipates that with forthcoming retirements and demographic changes, that Ontario will face skills shortages.

Committee Recommendation

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts recommends that:

- 5. The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities shall provide the Standing Committee on Public Accounts with a report assessing the extent of anticipated skills shortages in high demand trades in Ontario and on any initiatives underway to attract apprentices to those trades.**

Enforcement of Legislation on Restricted Trades

The Auditor noted that 21 trades are designated as restricted to certified tradespersons or registered apprentices. Restricted trades include such occupations as automotive technician and construction electrician. In 1993 the Ministry delegated enforcement of certificate requirements for 20 of these trades to the Ministry of Labour (MOL). The Auditor said that on site visits to motive power shops, consultants have found unlicensed workers doing restricted work illegally. He also noted that enforcement is a challenge in this sector as work is often not concentrated at one job site. The Auditor recommended that the Ministry should work with other ministries and bodies that have enforcement responsibilities in industries that require certification to share the plans for and results of enforcement activities and to develop a risk-based strategy for inspecting businesses and work sites in those industries.

The Ministry said that the College will work with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Transportation and other ministries that have a role in the enforcement and health and safety of job sites to ensure that all those performing work (or a part of work) in a compulsory or restricted trade are certified to do so. Any enforcement responsibilities delegated to the College will complement Ministry of Labour activities.

On October 17, 2008 the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities entered into an agreement with the Ministry of Labour that allows Ministry of Labour inspectors to access Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities data to support their enforcement activities. If an inspector inspects a work site in a restricted trade and a worker is not able to produce a certificate, the inspector is able to ask for the individual's name and to check the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities data to determine whether the worker is registered as an apprentice or a journeyman. Previously, privacy issues prevented inspectors from doing this, but the formal agreement between the two ministries ensures that all freedom of information provisions will be respected. The Ministry is working with the Ministry of Transportation to establish the same kind of access to data to facilitate compliance and enforcement activity.

Committee Recommendation

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts recommends that:

- 6. The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities in consultation with the Ministry of Labour shall provide the Standing Committee on Public Accounts with a status report on the results of Ministry of Labour's inspections of employers in restricted trades since implementation of the new agreement between the two ministries that provides Ministry of Labour inspectors with access to Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities data. The report should specify whether or not enforcement has improved as a result of the agreement, any changes to enforcement responsibilities that would result from the creation of the Ontario College of Trades, and whether a risk-based strategy for inspecting businesses and work sites in restricted trades is under consideration.**

Increasing the Number of Restricted Trades

The College will have the mandate to increase the number of restricted trades. The number would remain constant unless the College opted for an increase.

Exam Process for Specific Sectors within a Restricted Trade

There are a number of specific trades within the automotive sector including alignment and brake technician, and electronic accessory technician. The Committee noted that it believed that mechanics specializing in one area for on-the-job training were expected to write an exam that covered other areas for which they had received no on-the-job training. The Committee asked how the Ministry assists such people in writing the exam. The Ministry replied that it recognizes that work is specialized in some industries. For specific trades in an industry, the Ministry has associated on-the-job and in-school training, the latter including specific standards and curricula. The Ministry said that it works closely with industry when it develops training standards and curricula, in order to ensure, for example, that the standards reflect current industry needs.

Advisory Committees and Industry Committees

Provincial advisory committees and industry committees exist for trades or groups of related trades. The Ministry works with these committees on the training standards and curricula discussed above. The College of Trades will be responsible for the development of those training standards and curricula and will work with representatives from industry on this.

Apprenticeship Training Tax Credit

The Ministry said that, as recommended by the Auditor, it is working with the Ministry of Finance to evaluate whether the apprenticeship training tax credit is achieving the expected outcomes (whether it is helpful and effective in encouraging employers to hire apprentices and in reducing skills shortages) and whether improvements are needed to enhance the effectiveness of the tax credit. The Ministry noted that the tax credit is administered by the Ministry of Finance and said the role of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities is to promote the tax credit and to encourage more employers to hire apprentices.

Committee Recommendation

The Standing Committee of Public Accounts recommends that:

- 7. The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities shall report back to the Standing Committee of Public Accounts on the outcome of its joint evaluation with the Ministry of Finance on whether or not the Apprenticeship Training Tax Credit is achieving the expected outcomes and on any planned improvements.**

Ontario Skills Development Program and Self-Employment Benefit Program

Since January 2007, the Ministry has been responsible for the Skills Development Program and the Self-Employment Benefit Program, which were both previously run by the federal government. The Auditor cited weaknesses, including the following, for both programs:

- inconsistencies in local office decisions to provide support;
- a need for improved monitoring to ensure participants complete training and comply with program requirements; and
- insufficient program monitoring (the Auditor noted, for example, that there is insufficient information on whether clients remain employed in fields they were trained for).

Management Framework for Programs

The Ministry noted that the Auditor recommended (for both programs) that steps be taken to ensure consistent delivery and levels of support for customers no matter where they live. The Ministry described the Auditor's observations as timely. The Ministry is transforming Employment Ontario to better serve

customers and said the Auditor's recommendations will assist in this process. A key component will be the development and implementation of a performance management framework for the training programs. This framework for training services will set out three broad dimensions of service delivery success: effectiveness, customer service, and efficiency. Performance indicators will be developed to clearly track client characteristics, outcomes of training, customer service standards and provincial targets.

Ontario Skills Development Program

The Ministry provided additional information on the Ontario Skills Development Program. It said that the number of people participating in the program increased by 14% to 13,239 in 2008-09 in comparison with the previous year. It added that the Job Connect program continues to serve people who face barriers to finding work, those educated overseas, and people participating in Ontario Works.

Client Frustrations

The Committee noted frustration among constituents regarding timeliness of responses to applications for both the Ontario Skills Development Program and the Self-Employment Benefit Program. The Ministry acknowledged that there are areas of friction as clients move through the system and said that the system inherited by Ontario from the federal government resulted in parallel systems running at the community level. The task of connecting people to the right service can pose challenges in some cases.

The Ministry described steps involved for an individual applying for the Ontario Skills Development Program. During the assessment period a consultant meets with the applicant to assess whether training is the right option to pursue. Ideally, the applicant will receive an appointment for this assessment within five days. However, in communities where there are significant layoffs, that service target may not be met. The Ministry has taken measures to address this.

If the applicant's preference is for training, that person is asked to explore training options. The Ministry described this as a client-focused approach which can take time and said it tries to ensure this task is not onerous. The next step is to determine income support available to the individual during training. This step also takes time, at a traumatic point in the life of someone who has just been laid off. The Ministry requires these steps because it will be investing a significant amount of public money in any person who pursues training.

Even after a person is approved for the program, friction can still occur. For example a client may wish to begin training immediately, but training opportunities may not arise quickly and possibly not until the next big intake at a college. The Ministry also monitors clients during training. As noted earlier, the program involves numerous steps, which does generate frustration.

Ontario Skills Development Program Application Rejections

The Ministry rejects applications to the Ontario Skills Development Program in certain circumstances (it will provide feedback to the applicant). In most cases rejection occurs when the requested training is either for a longer term or at a higher level than the Ministry is willing to support. This may occur, for example, in cases where an applicant wants to train to teach at a university. In other cases, individuals may not meet the criterion for “unemployed.” Sometimes a person anticipates a layoff, wants to be proactive and applies to the program, but the Ministry said that its rules prevent such a person from applying. The Ministry will also turn down applications for training at schools (private colleges) that are not registered and said registration with the Ministry is necessary to ensure that the school offers good quality training.

Plans for Program Changes

The Ministry described the Auditor’s program recommendations as balanced and said that the Auditor correctly noted cost variations in client training. The Ministry has now capped support at \$28,000, though cited certain cases when the cap might be exceeded. The Ministry’s primary concern was to ensure uninterrupted service in programs transferred to it from the federal government. It believes program improvements will be necessary, has already taken small steps, and will focus on larger issues in the future. The Ministry noted that the programs are in demand given the significant number of layoffs and associated need for training.

Literacy and Basic Skills Program

The Auditor believes that the Ministry has addressed some funding inequities in the Literacy and Basic Skills Program but said that inequities remain. He noted that many providers spent funding without delivering the required service hours. The Auditor recommended that the Ministry report separately on outcomes for clients who exit the program at various phases (for example, those who exit after an assessment without receiving any intensive training versus those who complete the program). He also recommended tracking and reporting on the length of time learners remain in the program, and implementing a funding model that recognizes learner outcomes and better matches funding to service levels provided.

The Ministry said that it is developing a performance-based management system, with the assistance of partners and technology. It provided the following information on literacy and basic skills training:

- The 2009 Ontario budget announced \$90 million in funding over two years to expand training.
- A Ministry focus will include initiatives such as community literacy, distance learning, and workplace literacy.
- In 2008-09 an investment of nearly \$75 million funded programs at almost 300 sites across Ontario including colleges, school boards and community-

based organizations; almost \$2.67 million was provided in one-time funding to literacy and basic skills service providers.

- The program assisted nearly 50,000 learners in 2007-08 with 67% of exiting learners going on to further education and employment.
- The number of learners served and their rates of success have increased steadily since 2003-04.
- A goal is to provide customers with high-quality literacy services no matter where they live.
- Work is underway with partners to develop a literacy curriculum and a common assessment tool to gauge the effectiveness of literacy programs.

The Ministry noted that those laid-off have often worked for years in manufacturing. These people may require training in literacy, math and other essential skills before they can consider pursuing further education or retraining. The Ministry works with partners and service providers to try to meet these people's needs. The Ministry added that the program extends beyond training in basic reading and writing skills including, for example, the development of computer and oral communication skills.

The Ministry emphasized that literacy learners move through the program at their own pace. Some may not undertake full-time training for a variety of reasons including part-time work commitments or child care issues. The program is learner-focused. Some learners need literacy skills to become independent; for others, the goal may be employment or further education and training.

Program Streams

The Ministry said there are four streams in the Literacy and Basic Skills Program – anglophone, francophone, a stream for deaf persons, and one for Aboriginal people.

New Curriculum

The Ministry is developing a literacy and basic skills curriculum, which will be available in 2011-12. It is working closely with literacy service providers on the curriculum, which will be tested in pilots. The curriculum will focus on a variety of learner pathways (and goals) including the following: independence, employment, credit study, post-secondary education, and apprenticeship. Service providers currently use a variety of tools (both those available through the Ministry and those developed by service providers) for training.

Standardizing Contact Hours

The Committee asked how the Ministry addressed the Auditor's concern regarding discrepancies in the number of learner contact hours at different service providers. The Ministry replied that all provide training but many, at different levels, varying from grade 1 equivalency to high school equivalency. The Ministry currently uses contact hours for tracking, but will examine a different,

standardized approach in the future and said that it will take “a couple of years” to develop this new approach. Transformation of the Literacy and Basic Skills Program will include improving the performance management system for literacy; measuring skills attained by learners; and developing the new curriculum.

Committee Recommendation

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts recommends that:

- 8. The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities shall provide the Standing Committee on Public Accounts with a status report on the development of its performance management frameworks for the Ontario Skills Development Program, the Self-Employment Benefit Program, and the Literacy and Basic Skills Program, noting specific performance indicators that will be used in the frameworks and timelines for implementation of the frameworks.**

LIST OF COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts recommends that:

- 1. Within three months of the end of the 2009-10 fiscal year, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities shall provide the Standing Committee on Public Accounts with data on the number of registrations and completions for each trade in the Apprenticeship Program for 2009-10.**
- 2. The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities shall provide the Standing Committee on Public Accounts with a status report on the implementation of the Employment Ontario Information System, explaining how the system is helping the Ministry track accurate completion rates and providing a timeline for when the system will be fully implemented.**
- 3. The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities shall provide the Standing Committee on Public Accounts with a status report on measures that the Ministry is undertaking to increase the percentage of those registered in an apprenticeship program that actually complete the program. The Ministry shall also provide the Committee with an update on its most recent research into the causes of non-completions.**
- 4. The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities shall report back to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts by the end of 2010 on the results of the Ontario College of Trades' review of the appropriate journeyman-to-apprentice ratios.**
- 5. The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities shall provide the Standing Committee on Public Accounts with a report assessing the extent of anticipated skills shortages in high demand trades in Ontario and on any initiatives underway to attract apprentices to those trades.**
- 6. The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities in consultation with the Ministry of Labour shall provide the Standing Committee on Public Accounts with a status report on the results of Ministry of Labour's inspections of employers in restricted trades since implementation of the new agreement between the two ministries that provides Ministry of Labour inspectors with access to Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities data. The report should specify whether or not enforcement has improved as a result of the agreement, any changes to enforcement responsibilities that would result from the creation of the Ontario College of Trades, and**

whether a risk-based strategy for inspecting businesses and work sites in restricted trades is under consideration.

- 7. The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities shall report back to the Standing Committee of Public Accounts on the outcome of its joint evaluation with the Ministry of Finance on whether or not the Apprenticeship Training Tax Credit is achieving the expected outcomes and on any planned improvements.**
- 8. The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities shall provide the Standing Committee on Public Accounts with a status report on the development of its performance management frameworks for the Ontario Skills Development Program, the Self-Employment Benefit Program, and the Literacy and Basic Skills Program, noting specific performance indicators that will be used in the frameworks and timelines for implementation of the frameworks.**