

Ministry of Education

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November 10, 2023

Dr. Cameron Montgomery
Chair
Education Quality and Accountability Office
2 Carlton Street, Suite 1200
Toronto, ON M5B 2M9

Subject: EQAO's Letter of Direction for 2024-25

Dear Dr. Montgomery,

I am pleased to share our government's 2024-25 priorities for the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO). As Chair, you play a vital role in ensuring EQAO achieves its mandate to support education through developing and administering tests to evaluate province-wide student learning.

Following the release of the 2022-23 EQAO results it is clear that we must focus on catching up on the fundamentals – reading, writing and math. These are fundamentals that all Ontario students deserve. The work that you and your fellow EQAO directors undertake to establish the goals, objectives and strategic direction ensures that EQAO fulfills its mandate in a responsible manner, keeping our education system accountable for these fundamental skills.

This letter sets out my expectations for EQAO for 2024-25, per the requirements of the Agencies and Appointments Directive. In fulfilling EQAO's legislated mandate, my key expectations include:

- continuing the implementation of digitized and adaptive assessments for the Primary and Junior Divisions, the Grade 9 Math assessment and Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test in an accessible manner;
- supporting the government's commitment to building students' foundational skills by providing assessment data to support improvement planning and accountability, including the reporting system that allows for the visualization and analysis of EQAO data by school boards;
- working closely with the Ministry and the Community Services I&IT Cluster to manage and address IT and system-related risks, including privacy risks.

I look forward to discussing these priorities as they are required to be reflected in EQAO's upcoming business plan and future annual reports.

In addition, I have listed below the government-wide commitments for board-governed provincial agencies. Please see the attached guide for further details of each priority. The government wide priorities are:

1. Competitiveness, Sustainability and Expenditure Management

- Operating within the agency's financial allocations.
- Identifying and pursuing opportunities for revenue generation, efficiencies and savings through innovative practices, and/or improved program sustainability.
- Complying with applicable direction related to accounting practices and supply chain centralization, including leveraging Supply Ontario's bulk purchasing arrangement and working with Supply Ontario on strategic procurement initiatives.
- Complying with realty interim measures for agency office space.
- Leverage and meet benchmarked outcomes for compensation strategies and directives.

2. Transparency and Accountability

- Abiding by applicable government directives and policies and ensuring transparency and accountability in reporting.
- Adhering to accounting standards and practices, and responding to audit findings, where applicable.
- Identifying appropriate skills, knowledge and experience needed to effectively support the board's role in agency governance and accountability, and providing the Minister with annual skills matrices to ensure boards have qualified appointees.
- Reviewing and updating agency KPIs annually to ensure efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability.

3. Risk Management

- Developing and implementing an effective process for the identification, assessment and mitigation of agency risks, including cyber security, and any future emergency risks.

4. Workforce/Labour Management

- Optimizing your organizational capacity to support the best possible public service delivery, including redeploying resources to priority areas, where needed.
- Supporting the implementation of the Community Jobs Initiative (CJI) by identifying opportunities to relocate new or existing agencies to lower cost communities across Ontario (as per MBC Realty Directive, s. 5.4), as applicable.
- Aligning Human Resource and Accommodations strategies with OPS directives and policy.

- Adhering to TB/MBC labour and bargaining mandates.
- Prudently and efficiently managing operational funding and workforce size.

5. Diversity and Inclusion

- Developing and encouraging diversity and inclusion initiatives by promoting an equitable, inclusive, accessible, anti-racist and diverse workplace.
- Adopting an inclusion engagement process to ensure all voices are heard to inform policies and decision-making.

6. Data Collection, Sharing and Use

- Improving how the agency uses data in decision-making, information sharing and reporting, to inform outcome-based reporting and improve service delivery.
- Increasing data sharing with Supply Ontario when applicable regarding procurement spending and planning, contract arrangements and vendor relations to support data-driven decision-making.

7. Digital Delivery and Customer Service

- Exploring and implementing digitization for online service delivery to ensure customer service standards are met.
- Using a variety of approaches or tools to ensure service delivery in all situations.

I thank you and your fellow board members for your continued commitment to education in our province. Your work and ongoing support is invaluable to me and the people of Ontario.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact Deputy Minister Kate Manson-Smith at kate.manson-smith@ontario.ca.

Sincerely,



Hon. Stephen Lecce
Minister of Education

Enclosure: Government Priorities for Agency Sector Chart

c: Dan Koenig, Chief Executive Officer, EQAO
Kate Manson-Smith, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education
Yael Ginsler, Assistant Deputy Minister, Student Achievement Division, Ministry of Education