

**Education Quality and
Accountability Office**



2021–2022 ANNUAL REPORT

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Board of Directors

Dr. Cameron Montgomery, Chair
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Yvonne Akpoveta
October 7, 2021–October 6, 2023

Martyn Beckett
May 6, 2022–May 5, 2024

Dr. Serge Demers
August 6, 2020–August 5, 2022

Sarabjit Kaur
May 13, 2021–May 12, 2022

Mandy Nwobu
September 2, 2021–September 1,
2022

Dr. Kinga Petrovai
March 30, 2022–March 29, 2023

Dr. Kyle Wilson
June 18, 2020–June 17, 2022

Chief Executive Officer

Dan Koenig
September 1, 2021–August 31, 2023

Message from the Chair

On behalf of the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO), I am pleased to present the agency's annual report for the 2021–2022 fiscal year. The agency is committed to supporting student learning and ensuring our publicly funded education system remains accountable to Ontarians.

During the past fiscal year, the agency pursued its digitalization and modernization initiative. In May 2021, the Government of Ontario announced that all regular EQAO assessments would resume for the 2021–2022 school year, and that they would be administered online to students attending in-person learning. While conducting its activities and developing and administering its online assessments successfully in schools throughout Ontario, the agency continued to adhere to the latest guidance and directives from the government.

Over the course of the fiscal year, the agency saw some notable changes in EQAO's governance and executive leadership. In September 2021, EQAO welcomed Dan Koenig, who was appointed chief executive officer of the agency. With more than three decades of public service in education, Mr. Koenig is a highly respected and passionate educator who will lead the continued digitalization of EQAO's assessments. The EQAO Board of Directors also welcomed new members Yvonne Akpoveta, Martyn Beckett, Sarabjit Kaur, Mandy Nwobu and Kinga Petrovai. These dedicated professionals bring their vast sector expertise and thorough understanding of education to the agency.

Since EQAO's inception, data and research on student achievement and attitudes have provided helpful insights to support education stakeholders in their decision making. As it continues on its digitalization and modernization path, the agency will actively pursue its consultation and collaboration with partners, in accordance with its commitment to equity and accountability, to achieve excellence in every aspect of its operations and governance.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cameron Montgomery". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Cameron Montgomery
Chair, EQAO Board of Directors

Message from the Chief Executive Officer

On behalf of EQAO's staff, I am delighted to present the agency's annual report for 2021–2022. The initiatives listed here speak to EQAO's commitment to supporting the improvement of student outcomes through advancements in large-scale assessment, leading to evidence-informed decision making.

As the education sector transforms, EQAO follows suit. The agency aims to meet the specific needs of every student across the province through a large-scale assessment program that is accessible and that reflects the transformation the education system has undergone in recent years. The COVID-19 pandemic experienced globally made it abundantly clear that new, increasingly digital and interactive methods of learning require a modern evaluation program that is tailored to a diverse student population and to the schools of today. This fiscal year, EQAO moved briskly ahead with its multi-year modernization initiative. After a two-year pause, EQAO administered its first ever full-census online assessment program during the 2021–2022 school year. The agency will also release its online assessments' achievement data along with helpful attitudinal and contextual information later in 2022, after completing standard setting for its new e-assessments. The release of this data will give a first glimpse at how students are doing at this specific time to support learning recovery after the disturbances caused by the pandemic.

Based on the invaluable feedback of its stakeholders, the agency leveraged digital tools and communication channels to convey information in a more engaging and adaptable manner. Following the successful field testing of the agency's secondary-level e-assessments during the 2020–2021 school year, the agency released its findings by utilizing an interactive, flexible and user-friendly online tool (Microsoft Power BI) to present, on the EQAO website, the feedback collected from both the field tests and related stakeholder questionnaires. The same Power BI digital tool will also be used to release all assessment data in the fall of 2022 to allow educators and the public to access this information in a more seamless way. For the first time in EQAO's history, administration user guides, frameworks, learning modules and other supporting documents were made available through EQAO's website, reducing the agency's paper footprint while EQAO continued to offer direct contact with its stakeholders. Additionally, the agency revamped and animated sections of its website to ease navigation and increase awareness of the agency's modernization project so far.

A priority of EQAO's digitalization and modernization is addressing matters of anti-racism, equity, diversity and inclusion, as the agency envisions a future in which large-scale assessments and their data reflect the lived educational experiences of all students throughout the province. EQAO pursued this priority this fiscal year by initiating a thorough review of its internal processes and procedures to address and rectify any issues encountered. The agency also built on existing partnerships and established new ones to deepen its collaboration with equity-seeking groups and ensure their feedback is reflected in the agency's activities and assessment program.

EQAO abides by the highest standards in its operations, large-scale assessments and data collection. The agency understands that by working in tandem with the education sector, community leaders and experts from other fields who are committed to positive change, EQAO can make a difference, through the information it offers, in lifetime outcomes of each student in Ontario.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "D. Koenig". The letter "D" is large and stylized, with a loop at the top. The name "Koenig" is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dan Koenig
EQAO Chief Executive Officer

About EQAO

EQAO was established in 1996 following a recommendation of the Ontario Royal Commission on Learning. After consulting extensively with Ontarians and the education community, the Commission concluded that province-wide assessments would help address the desire among Ontarians for greater quality and accountability in the publicly funded education system.

EQAO is an arm's-length agency of the Ministry of Education that supports student learning in Ontario. Our data, research and resources empower parents and guardians, educators, policy-makers and others with the information needed to determine how best to strengthen student outcomes across the province. Throughout its work, EQAO is committed to anti-racism, equity, diversity and inclusion.

To help improve student learning, EQAO administers large-scale assessments that align with *The Ontario Curriculum*; contribute to education research; and assist parents and guardians, policy-makers, Ontarians and the education community at large in understanding, analyzing and appropriately using EQAO data.

EQAO is currently pursuing a multi-faceted and multi-year modernization initiative that focuses on five distinct areas:

- large-scale assessments,
- reports,
- research,
- engagement with Ontarians, and
- internal business processes.

The agency's goal is to provide evidence-informed insights into student learning to facilitate the success of each Ontario student. EQAO strives to continually enhance its high-quality large-scale assessment program to ensure it is equitable, inclusive and reflective of Ontario's diversity so that all students can demonstrate their understanding of the provincial curriculum.

By assessing each student in relation to the learning expectations outlined in *The Ontario Curriculum*, EQAO offers independent data at key stages in students' K–12 educational journey. The agency provides schools and school boards with reports about their students' achievement and personalized reports for students who write an assessment to help support their individual learning. Additional contextual, attitudinal and behavioural information from questionnaires offers valuable insights into student experiences, and EQAO assessment data are used by educators to improve student learning.

EQAO's data, in addition to classroom and school board information, helps the education community consider key trends through collaborative inquiries. Such insights help stakeholders make evidence-informed decisions when developing improvement plans that foster equitable and inclusive learning environments for students. EQAO's information also helps to guide the analysis and decisions of parents and guardians and policy-makers.

The agency's outreach programs help build capacity for the appropriate use of EQAO data. Through webinars, virtual conferences, events and other resources, the agency provides tools that educators, parents and guardians, policy-makers, researchers and the education community at large can use to align their strategies with best practices in assessment and education, both nationally and internationally, helping to empower educators with the resources needed to support and enhance positive outcomes for students.

Through research, EQAO investigates factors that influence student achievement, school effectiveness and best assessment practices. The agency also coordinates Ontario's participation in national and international assessments (e.g., PCAP, PISA, PIRLS, TIMSS) that test students in mathematics, science, technology, financial literacy, collaborative problem solving, and reading and writing, and that evaluate the general well-being of students inside and outside of the school environment.

Values

- EQAO values giving all students the opportunity to reach their highest possible level of achievement and well-being.
- EQAO values its role as a service to educators, parents and guardians, students, government and the public in support of teaching and learning in the classroom.
- EQAO values credible evidence that informs professional practice and focuses attention on interventions that improve student success.
- EQAO values research that informs large-scale assessment and classroom practice.
- EQAO values the dedication and expertise of Ontario's educators and their involvement in all aspects of the assessment processes and the positive difference their efforts make in student outcomes.
- EQAO values the delivery of its programs and services by embracing diversity and moving beyond tolerance and celebration to inclusivity.

Strategic Priorities

In accordance with direction from its board of directors, EQAO develops a new strategic plan every three to five years to deliver on the agency's mandate of supporting and guiding student improvement by providing credible information about the quality and effectiveness of the province's publicly funded elementary and secondary education system. The following strategic priorities directed the agency's work during the 2021–2022 fiscal year:

- Strategic Priority 1: Digitalize and modernize all EQAO assessments.
- Strategic Priority 2: Commit to action on all applicable Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations and the development of an agency-wide equity, diversity and inclusion plan.
- Strategic Priority 3: Ensure effective governance and engagement in the agency's operations.

Strategic Priority 1—Digitalize and Modernize All EQAO Assessments

EQAO evaluates important facets of the quality and effectiveness of elementary and secondary public education in Ontario to support the continuous improvement of student outcomes in a fast-changing world. EQAO’s digitalization and modernization initiative helps the agency support positive outcomes for all students in a new digital landscape by ensuring EQAO’s assessment program is accessible, equitable, fair and reflective of Ontario’s diversity while continuing to align with the latest provincial curriculum. Leveraging technology to develop, administer and score large-scale standardized assessments ensures stakeholders and the public are receiving an accurate measure of how the education system is doing today, and in the future.

EQAO’s K–12 Assessment Program

Through its large-scale provincial assessment program, EQAO administers full-census standardized assessments at key stages in each student’s educational journey. This approach

- evaluates progress over time at the school, school board, provincial and individual student levels;
- fosters discussions about improvements to learning programs in schools and school boards across the province; and
- allows policy-makers to better understand system-wide trends and make student-focused and evidence-informed decisions.

EQAO K–12 Assessments	Grade of Administration	Subjects
Assessment of Reading, Writing and Mathematics, Primary Division	Grade 3 (Grades 1–3 curriculum)	Reading, writing, mathematics
Assessment of Reading, Writing and Mathematics, Junior Division	Grade 6 (Grades 4–6 curriculum)	Reading, writing, mathematics
Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics	Grade 9 (Grade 9 curriculum)	Mathematics
Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT)/ Test provincial de compétences linguistiques (TPCL)	Grade 10 (literacy skills expected by the curriculum across all subjects up to the end of Grade 9)	Literacy

Digitalization And Modernization: Transforming Large-Scale Assessments to Serve Ontarians Better

At the inception of its digitalization and modernization initiative, EQAO envisioned a future in which assessments and their data would reflect the digital landscape and the lived educational experiences of all students, and that would meet the

evolving needs of stakeholders and education partners. Rapid technological advances in the field of assessment made EQAO's vision for the future a reality for today.

Creating and Field Testing New Assessments in Support of Students and Educators

EQAO aims to transform its assessment program to meet the needs of Ontarians in matters of student learning. To adapt to the unprecedented changes and the new reality created by the global COVID-19 pandemic, and to actualize its modernization initiative in compliance with the agency's mandate, EQAO digitalized its operations, including its assessment program, at the beginning of the pandemic. As directed by the government, EQAO paused its full-census K–12 assessment administrations for the 2020–2021 school year. During that time, the agency field tested its first computer-based large-scale assessments at the secondary-school level to allow students and educators to become familiar with the new testing model, and to support the validation and continued development of EQAO's digital platform. In the fall of 2021, the findings from the field tests were published in the form of three reports consisting of feedback from students and educators on the new e-assessment system, and a description of the steps taken by the agency to ensure both technical readiness and stakeholder awareness of EQAO's new online models. Concurrently, the agency launched new user-friendly dashboards on its website, offering interactive visualization of the data (such as student, teacher and administrator perceptions about the online assessment, and feedback from educators who participated in EQAO's e-assessment information webinars) EQAO collected during the online field tests. Since EQAO's Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics and the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) were administered as field tests, the agency did not release school, board and provincial reports this fiscal year; however, individual student reports were provided.

In 2021, the government announced that large-scale assessments would resume for elementary-school students learning in person during the 2021–2022 school year, and that all large-scale assessments would be administered online. The lessons learned from field testing EQAO's e-assessments served as a foundation for the implementation of the agency's first full-census e-assessment administration in September 2021.

Adapting Large-Scale Assessments for Stakeholders of Today and Tomorrow

EQAO's digitalization and modernization initiative was initiated to allow the agency to support student learning better by presenting stakeholders with increased flexibility in assessment administration and easy access to timely assessment results, while continuing to create large-scale assessments that meet the best practices in quality and measurement.

During the 2021–2022 school year, in line with government direction, EQAO administered for the first time its K–12 e-assessments to elementary- and secondary-school students who were learning in person. The new online system allows for the assessments to be offered according to two different models: multi-stage computer adaptive testing (msCAT) and

testlet-based linear on-the-fly (tLOFT). The mathematics component of the primary- and junior-division Assessments of Reading, Writing and Mathematics, along with the Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics, are offered using a multi-stage computer adaptive testing (msCAT) model, where each student is presented with questions that are challenging yet align with the student's demonstrated skill set. During this type of adaptive assessment, modules (that is, groups of questions) increase or decrease in difficulty by one level at any stage, depending on the student's responses to the set of questions in the previous module. The msCAT model is precise and efficient at measuring student proficiency across the achievement scale, and since students do not all answer the same sets of questions (also known as items), msCAT allows for flexible scheduling while maintaining test equivalency and security. The assessment's interactive content and optional built-in tools, such as virtual breathing exercises, reminders of test-taking strategies and minds-on activities, also allow for a more engaging and seamless experience for students.

The language (that is, reading and writing) component of the primary- and junior-division Assessments of Reading, Writing and Mathematics, along with the Ontario Secondary School Literacy test (OSSLT), are designed to be administered to students as a testlet-based linear on-the-fly (tLOFT) model. Groupings of items, called testlets, are generated in real time through the selection of pre-constructed and pre-equated groups of items, and, where applicable, an associated reading passage; the degree of difficulty is the same from testlet to testlet. Each module has corresponding items, or questions, mapped to a blueprint that identifies the skill, strategy, difficulty level and question type for each item.

Each of these digitalized assessments has a set of accessibility tools and support materials embedded into the onscreen student toolbar, and alternative versions of the assessments within the e-assessment system are made available to students who require them. Third-party software currently supported by the e-assessments include, for instance, Read&Write for Google Chrome, Dragon NaturallySpeaking, Kurzweil 3000 and NVDA Screen Reader; alternative secure access to the online assessments is also available if a chosen accessibility or accommodation software is not compatible with the e-assessment lockdown browser. Practice and sample tests, along with frameworks and user guides that provide details on how each assessment maps to Ontario curriculum expectations and on each assessment's administration procedures, are also available on EQAO's website.

[EQAO Assessment Development and Reporting Process](#)

To conduct assessments with integrity, EQAO ensures its processes meet the highest standards in technical quality. The agency follows a rigorous assessment-development process led by Ontario educators to ensure that selected materials and questions are linked to curriculum expectations and are appropriate for students across the province. The data that stem from all EQAO assessments are analyzed in depth, and reports derived from full-census assessment results and data are produced to provide reliable insights into student learning.

Creating Digitalized Assessments

EQAO assessments are created by Ontario educators who research, develop and select every question. Throughout the creation process, EQAO assessments are developed in collaboration with psychometricians and experts from around the world and across the education field. These committees help to ensure that EQAO assessments remain aligned with the most recent *Ontario Curriculum* and that they are fair, equitable and inclusive so that each student who writes them can fully participate and demonstrate understanding of curriculum expectations. The development activities and committee work are undertaken by both English and French experts.

Educators are selected to participate in EQAO activities based on the following criteria:

- diversity;
- geographic location, to ensure representation from all parts of the province and from both rural and urban regions;
- current elementary- and secondary-level experience (i.e., teachers, administrators, subject experts and consultants); and
- expertise in evaluation and assessment, including large-scale assessment.

Work groups, such as the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee and the Assessment Development Committee, ensure that all items are accessible to students, are age and grade appropriate, and align to the curriculum being measured. Once the items are approved by the committees, the items become part of what is called an item bank. These items can then be field tested in schools across the province before becoming part of the operational assessment—that is, the assessment administered to students on a large scale, where the items are counted in the results. This process helps ensure that students will be able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the curriculum when responding to items. The items that appeared in the language component of EQAO's 2021–2022 school year full-census assessments were mainly those that were either field tested previously or part of an operational assessment in a previous year. The items that appeared in the mathematics component of the assessments were mainly new items that were developed to reflect and address the content of the new Ontario mathematics curricula. These items have not been previously field tested.

Administering Digitalized Assessments

EQAO relies on the support and collaboration of educators to administer the assessments. This fiscal year, for each assessment, EQAO published an online user guide for teachers, school administrators and school board IT professionals that includes detailed guidelines and clear steps to follow to ensure consistent administration across Ontario. For each assessment, EQAO also published new sets of frequently asked questions, which are located in a new section of the EQAO website. Additionally, the agency hosted informative webinars for teachers, principals and information technology school board contacts; EQAO also offered individualized presentations to school boards, upon request.

The agency's new e-assessments allow for more assessment administration windows throughout the school year and provide school administrators with more flexibility when scheduling assessments. During the 2021–2022 school year, the Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics was administered from October 1, 2021, to June 24, 2022. The Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) administration window was open from October 13 to December 3, 2021, and from March 23 to May 18, 2022. The primary- and junior-division Assessments of Reading, Writing and Mathematics were administered from May 4 to June 24, 2022.

By March 31, 2022, approximately

- 45 school boards, 258 schools and 14 466 students had participated in the Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics; and
- 70 school boards, 756 schools and 145 150 students had participated in the OSSLT (59 school boards, 695 schools and 140 438 students had participated in the OSSLT in English and 11 school boards, 61 schools et 4 712 students had participated in the OSSLT in French).

Questionnaires created by EQAO are completed during the assessment administration period to collect information on the factors inside and outside the classroom that may affect student learning and achievement. This additional contextual, attitudinal and behavioural information from questionnaires offers valuable insights into student experiences during this extraordinary pandemic time and is used by educators to improve student learning as well.

During the 2021–2022 school year, at the end of the online assessment sessions, students were presented with redesigned and reformulated questionnaires that asked them about their attitudes and perceptions with respect to mathematics and literacy, and about their pre- and post-assessment mindsets. These questionnaires, including those developed for teachers and principals, also provide EQAO with information on user experience with the e-assessment system and crucial feedback that helps with the continuous improvement of the e-assessment system.

Scoring Digitalized Assessments

All EQAO assessment items are scored according to established criteria, which helps to ensure the integrity and reliability of EQAO data as well as the comparability of assessment results from year to year. EQAO assessment items that are open-ended are scored online by educators who have successfully completed specific and rigorous training requirements. Educators from across the province bring their knowledge of the curriculum and classroom to the scoring process.

The item responses of the mathematics component of the online primary- and junior-division Assessments of Reading, Writing and Mathematics, and the online Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics, are scored automatically. This type of

computer-based scoring allows for rapid, automated multiple-choice question type data. The open-response items in the language component of the primary- and junior-division Assessments of Reading, Writing and Mathematics, and the open-response items of the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT), are scored by Ontario educators from across the province. Training for potential scorers of digital assessments continues to follow strict procedures but is now self-directed through an online system. Scorers who train and successfully complete the qualification test are invited to participate in scoring at their chosen time and from any location, providing they meet the necessary technical requirements and qualifications. All the resources required for training are now available online through the e-assessment system.

By the end of the fiscal year, 238 educators had scored the OSSLT that was field tested in the spring of 2021, and 616 educators had scored the full-census OSSLT administered during the 2021–2022 school year (fall 2021 administration window).

Reporting Results of Digitalized Assessments

The agency endeavours to provide user-friendly access to the data derived from its large-scale assessment results. With the introduction of digitalized assessments, EQAO's approach to reporting student assessment results to schools, school boards and to the public is in the process of being modernized.

Standard setting for large-scale assessments ensures that EQAO assessment results remain relevant and reflect changes at all levels. To align with EQAO's new e-assessment system, online scoring and delivery mode, and the recently introduced provincial curricula for elementary mathematics and de-streamed Grade 9 mathematics, new standards will be set to define EQAO assessments' levels of achievement. The assessment results that will be provided for the 2021–2022 school year, as well as for the next school year, will establish new baselines for achievement data and results.

The 2021–2022 school year assessment results that will be released publicly in the fall of 2022 will leverage a new reporting system that utilizes the Microsoft Power BI tool and will allow educators and the public to visualize EQAO data in new dynamic ways. EQAO enhanced its reporting channels, based on the feedback received from educators across the province, so that they can access more flexible and convenient reporting while continuing to obtain comprehensive information about student learning that schools and school boards can use for improvement planning. Additionally, the new tool allows greater flexibility in how data are visualized for educators and the public alike. As in the past, achievement results will continue to be reported by levels of achievement (that is, Levels 1 to 4) for EQAO's elementary assessments and the Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics, and by success rate (that is, successful and not yet successful) for the Ontario Secondary School Literacy test (OSSLT).

Computer-scoring of the multiple-select items on EQAO's e-assessments allows for faster and, in some cases, immediate reporting of results. For instance, teachers have access to an automated report on the student's achievement on the Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics shortly after the student completes the assessment. This report can then be forwarded to the student and the student's parent(s) or guardian(s). The results of the primary- and junior-division Assessments of Reading, Writing and Mathematics and the results of the OSSLT are released after all open-ended items have been scored by trained scorers, and an individual student report is generated after the scoring of the whole assessment.

Benefitting from External Expertise

EQAO uses multiple systematic quality-assurance processes to ensure the validity of its assessment data. Processes have been developed and are in place to support the validation of each of the agency's online assessments. The agency closely collaborates with its digital assessment services vendor and large-scale assessment experts to ensure industry standards are met for the assessments' technical performance and the integrity of the resulting data. In preparation for the transformation of Ontario's approach to large-scale assessments, EQAO worked with experts in the areas of national and international assessment, measurement and technology. Prior to the field-test and full-census administrations of its K–12 e-assessments, the agency conducted simulation studies using existing EQAO data to evaluate the effectiveness, accuracy and reliability of the e-assessment delivery model. This engagement has helped validate key aspects of the transition to online adaptive assessments.

Mathematics Proficiency Test (MPT)

In 2019, EQAO's mandate was expanded to include the development and scoring of a Mathematics Proficiency Test (MPT) for applicants to the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT). MPT-related activities also included identifying successful candidates to the OCT, conducting research on the results of the test and collecting information to assess the confidence and ability of the teacher applicants writing the test. A field test was successfully conducted from February 18 until March 7, 2020, to ensure the reliability and validity of the online test.

During the 2021–2022 fiscal year, the MPT operational assessment was administered from May 10 until December 15, 2021, and 8349 individuals participated in the assessment. At the end of December 2021, the requirement to successfully complete the MPT for certification with the Ontario College of Teachers was no longer in effect, and testing was paused due to a decision of the Divisional Court of the Ontario Superior Court of Justice.

National and International Assessments

EQAO coordinates Ontario's participation in national and international assessments on behalf of the provincial government. Those assessments are developed and administered by external organizations and provide a benchmark of Ontario students' learning in relation to that of students in other education systems and jurisdictions, both nationally and internationally. The results of these assessments contribute to the larger picture of student achievement in Ontario and benefit both the public as well as education policy-makers and thought leaders. During the 2021–2022 fiscal year, Ontario schools participated in the administration of the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), and the field study of an electronic version of the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) also took place. Additionally, the agency prepared for the administration of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), administered later in spring 2022.

Research

EQAO recognizes the need for a continued collaboration with partners to develop evidence-based studies and meaningful research programs that lead to effective and equitable educational experiences to support student learning and promote positive outcomes for all students in Ontario. Over the years, research projects leveraging EQAO data have shed a light on the variables that affect the development of the whole child and on the conditions that drive student learning and success. EQAO's evidence-based data aim to drive fairness and improvement, and support closing existing gaps in student achievement across the province.

A Close Look at Mathematics Series

In August 2021, EQAO posted on its website *A Close Look at Mathematics: Understanding Student Learning and Achievement in Ontario*, a compilation of research papers published by the agency from 2011 to 2019. This first volume of the series revisits EQAO research focusing on mathematics and numeracy over the years to help further understand the historical impact of data on the education system. This volume provides an in-depth review of EQAO data and insights over eight specific years, demonstrating the importance of examining learning contexts to gain a better understanding of mathematics achievement in Ontario.

Contributing to Education Research

EQAO seeks to disseminate to education stakeholders helpful information gleaned from EQAO data. This year, an EQAO-developed video series based on the results of the agency's Student Voices research project on student engagement was presented at the American Educational Research Association (AERA) annual meeting in April 2021. Additionally, AERA selected an EQAO proposal about the longitudinal relationship between students' mathematics attitude and achievement from Grades 3 to 9, which will be featured as part of AERA's 2022 annual meeting. In May 2021, EQAO staff attended the

48th annual Ontario Association for Mathematics Education (OAME) conference and presented the agency's insights into the changes to the Grade 9 mathematics curriculum, and how EQAO's new modernized Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics is designed to improve accessibility and equity for all students. At the end of the fiscal year, EQAO participated in the Advancing Assessment and Evaluation virtual conference, which was organized by Queen's University, and highlighted the agency's role in advancing assessment and evaluation by leveraging technology.

Promoting External Research

EQAO's assessment and questionnaire data inform research initiatives and discussions that pertain to the quality of education and the experience of students. During the fiscal year, the agency received and responded to 58 data requests that supported researchers and educators from local, national and international jurisdictions. Some of these requests came from EQAO partners in external research initiatives, such as the Offord Centre for Child Studies at McMaster University for a study of student development from kindergarten until Grade 10, and Unity Health Ontario to investigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on student achievement. The agency also provided media professionals with information to assist their journalistic pieces and provided other stakeholders with data to broaden their understanding of student achievement and learning in Ontario.

Strategic Priority 2—Commit to Action on All Applicable Truth and Reconciliation Commission Recommendations and the Development of an Agency-wide Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Plan

EQAO aims to better respond to the distinct educational requirements of every community across the province. To do so, the agency recognizes the necessity to develop and promote strong partnerships with First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities and other equity-seeking groups by first understanding their specific needs.

Engaging with Expert Partners and Learning from Leaders

As EQAO moves forward, to ensure it can successfully respond to the needs of stakeholders from groups and communities who have faced bias in the past and who continue to seek equity today, the agency must first raise its awareness by being an active listener and establishing how its endeavours can help student populations belonging to these groups and communities. This fiscal year, EQAO focused on creating the foundation that will establish how the agency will engage in promoting equity, diversity, inclusion and anti-racism. By the end of this business cycle, EQAO aims to have a solid picture of what each of the initiatives developed and implemented will encompass, and how they supported communities in matters of student learning and outcomes.

This past year, EQAO began the process of conducting an agency-wide internal review of its equity, diversity and inclusion policies, procedures and culture. Additionally, a review was conducted by an expert third party to examine internal awareness and understanding of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)*, and to identify any gaps while complying with AODA requirements. Through various EQAO representatives, the agency maintained a presence at several forums and events (such as the Council for Exceptional Children annual conference) organized by persons with disabilities and other equity-seeking groups across the province. The agency pursued its collaboration with equity-seeking partners, Indigenous groups and the Ministry of Education to explore ways it can enhance its contribution to improve outcomes for all students. Throughout the year, EQAO sought to add more Indigenous voices to its various committees. The agency continued to attend educational events, such as Indspire's National Gathering for Indigenous Education, developed by Indigenous partners, and EQAO continued to reach out to Indigenous communities, including to 106 federally funded First Nations schools, through live webinars and virtual meetings.

Strategic Priority 3—Ensure Effective Governance and Engagement in the Agency’s Operations

EQAO is committed to helping Ontarians better understand the role and operations of the agency and the value of the information it provides so that they can engage in thought-provoking discussions about education and make informed decisions on how best to improve the publicly funded education system. The agency recognizes the importance of being accountable to Ontarians and is committed to transparency and best practices in all aspects of its functions in order to operate as a responsible and effective organization. Through the release of pertinent information about EQAO’s initiatives, and through the promotion of evidence-based data and insights collected from assessments and questionnaires, the agency hopes the public at large and members of the education sector alike can reflect on the quality of public education in Ontario and participate in a dynamic, productive and collaborative dialogue about student learning, especially during these unique times.

Communicating and Engaging with All of Ontario

The agency’s approach to integrated communications leverages multiple channels and fosters a partnership with schools and school boards and other stakeholders. EQAO receives queries from the public, the media, educators and researchers on various matters on a regular basis, and the agency provides answers and helpful guidance in a timely manner to facilitate a broader and deeper understanding of the agency’s contributions to student learning and positive outcomes.

There are many channels through which the agency communicates and builds relationships with audiences, including:

- EQAO’s website;
- social media platforms;
- news media relations;
- EQAO’s information centre;
- engagement with partners and stakeholders;
- presentations to schools, school boards, faculties of education, parents and guardians and other groups; and
- conferences and events.

Delivering Information That Fosters Conversations About Education Today

EQAO’s accessible communication initiatives and campaigns provide information about EQAO’s online assessments, student achievement, and context for assessment and questionnaire results. These initiatives and campaigns also present information and insights in simplified and user-friendly ways to facilitate a greater understanding of student learning in

Ontario, create opportunities to promote conversations around education and foster reflection about equity, quality and accountability in our public education system.

During the fiscal year, EQAO continued to execute wide-reaching bilingual communications initiatives, focusing for the most part on digital communications and stakeholder relations, to inform Ontarians about EQAO's activities and new online assessments, digitalization and modernization and research products.

From April 2021 until March 2022, the agency

- conducted campaigns that increased engagement on the agency's English- and French-language social media channels and in their communities, which grew by more than 5% overall.
- disseminated public-friendly content and resources about EQAO's new online assessments, their design, characteristics and administration.
- released reports and interactive information about its online field tests on its website.

In December 2021, EQAO launched a new digital way of presenting information and data to the public with the design and implementation of interactive dashboards that utilize the Microsoft Power BI tool, to coincide with the release of the agency's field test reports. The interactive and user-friendly dashboards allow users to access detailed information, according to the specific data the users request, related to EQAO's first online field tests that were administered during the 2020–2021 school year.

As stakeholders and the public became aware of EQAO's multi-year transformation through the administration of the agency's first online assessments, the agency revamped the "About EQAO" section of its website in March 2022 to offer comprehensive content about the agency's digitalization and modernization by using an engaging and animated presentation. Additionally, EQAO redesigned various sections of its website and added simplified accessible webpages to enable users to effortlessly visit and quickly access the information they require, such as a new frequently-asked-questions webpage and a more effective landing page to support the new digital assessment administration.

Offering Support to Education Professionals and Ontarians at Large

EQAO's public-facing information centre serves as a primary point of contact, not only for the professionals who administer EQAO assessments, but also for parents and guardians, students, scorers, members of the public and the media. The information centre responds to various queries and provides updates on assessment-administration procedures. During the 2021–2022 fiscal year, the information centre answered more than 4500 calls and replied to more than 5700 e-mails.

EQAO's School Support and Outreach team works directly with educators and education partners in the sector. In the wake of the agency's full-census online assessment administration during the 2021–2022 school year, EQAO continued to promote its digital assessments and their features and functionality by offering self-paced learning modules and webinars. The modules, offered for educators, are located on EQAO's website and are available for access at the learners' convenience. The live webinars are hosted by the agency's Outreach team.

These webinars were developed specifically for teachers and principals involved in the administration of the online assessments, as well as for school board IT professionals responsible for the technical readiness aspect of assessment administration in schools. Additionally, a recorded webinar was developed and posted to the EQAO website for parents of students taking EQAO assessments, offering information about the elementary-level assessments and tips on how to approach their children about the assessment. During the fiscal year, almost 3800 teachers, principals and school board IT staff members attended 83 interactive webinars in English and in French offered regularly throughout the year. The agency also presented at Ontario conferences around educational technology, special education and student exceptionalism to share the characteristics and benefits of EQAO's new online assessment program, its increased accessibility and its future possibilities.

Committing to Excellence and Fairness in Governance and Operations

EQAO recognizes the importance of being accountable to Ontarians and is committed to transparency and best practices in governance in order to operate as a responsible, effective and fair organization. EQAO is an agency of the Government of Ontario and abides by the *Agencies and Appointments Directive* and the Memorandum of Understanding with the Minister of Education to ensure effective operations and stewardship of public funds.

This fiscal year, EQAO actively pursued the digitalization and administration of its elementary- and secondary-level assessment program and continued to conduct its operations and activities with integrity.

Leading the Agency to Prepare for the Future

EQAO is governed by a board of directors appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. During the 2021–2022 fiscal year, EQAO's board of directors held four official virtual meetings to oversee the work of the agency in alignment with its mandate as defined by the *Education Quality and Accountability Office Act, 1996* (the *EQAO Act*). The board provided strategic direction and approved the agency's business plan, financial statements, risk assessments, contract decisions and annual report in accordance with the agency's *Delegation of Authority Directive*. The Chair serves as the ethics executive for all appointees, including the board of directors.

The board's connection to EQAO operations is through the chief executive officer (CEO), who is accountable to the board for overseeing the management and the operations of the agency and supervising the agency's staff. The CEO carries out the roles and responsibilities as approved by the board and communicated via the Chair. The agency operates under the direction set out in the *EQAO Act*, the Memorandum of Understanding and the applicable agency directives set out by the Management Board of Cabinet. The CEO is delegated the duty to manage the day-to-day operational matters of the agency and serves as the ethics executive for the EQAO's staff under the *Public Services of Ontario Act (PSOA)*.

Relying on Professional and Dedicated Staff

EQAO's accomplishments are made possible through the dedication and work of its staff. The agency acknowledges the professionalism and expertise of each member of its staff as EQAO pursues the digitalization and modernization of its assessment program and activities to support Ontario's public education system. The establishment and administration of the agency's full-census large-scale online assessment program this fiscal year is a testament to the knowledge and commitment of staff from across the agency, who continued to adapt quickly to frequent changes due to the unpredictable demands of the ongoing pandemic.

Collaborating with Advisory Committees

EQAO's operational direction includes advice from external working groups, composed of knowledgeable experts and representatives, who help guide the agency's work and inform its thinking on different aspects of its activities:

- **EQAO Advisory Committee (EAC):** This committee provides advice on agency initiatives, policies and programs. Additionally, EAC works to find feasible solutions to challenges raised by its members.
- **EQAO Student Engagement Committee (ESEC):** This committee acts as a unique forum for students to share their ideas and experiences. ESEC represents student voice in the agency's activities, ensuring students are informing EQAO's thinking as the agency continuously improves and modernizes its programs. ESEC is composed of 30 to 35 students from Grades 7 to 12 from across Ontario. These members offer insights on how EQAO can improve its assessments and programs and increase student engagement.
- **Modernization in Measurement Advisory Panel (MMAP):** This interdisciplinary group helps shape the future operations of large-scale assessments and their scoring and reporting activities. The committee is composed of experts who examine facets of assessment programs, such as the experiences of assessment users, authenticity and equity, psychometrics and technology, and knowledge sharing and reporting.
- **Psychometrics Advisory Committee (PAC):** This new committee put in place this fiscal year engages psychometrics experts with the goal of improving and modernizing each of EQAO's large-scale assessments in alignment with best practices in measurement and analysis.

Managing Public Resources Responsibly

EQAO is dedicated to effective business practices, and monitors and evaluates business processes to promote the continuous improvement of its activities. In alignment with applicable government directives, the agency continues to ensure accountability in human resources, finance and procurement along with strong service delivery through all of its operations.

The large-scale assessment program that EQAO offers measures how well students across the province are meeting the numeracy and literacy expectations defined in *The Ontario Curriculum* at key stages of learners' academic development. During the 2021–2022 fiscal year, in alignment with government direction, EQAO transformed its K–12 assessment program from a paper-based model to a digital one, which allows for greater accessibility and increased flexibility in the administration of the assessments. During the 2020–2021 school year, EQAO's secondary-level assessments were field tested to students attending in-person learning across the province; the agency resumed the full-census administration of all of its online assessments during the current school year. EQAO worked with the Ministry of Education to ensure it received the appropriate funding to support its operations. Overall, the cost of agency operations for the 2021–2022 fiscal year was approximately \$21.7 million.

This 2021–2022 fiscal year, members of the agency's board of directors received an annual remuneration according to government appointments and directives. Dr. Cameron Montgomery, full-time chair of EQAO, received \$140 000; Gail Anderson received \$3150; Yvonne Akpoveta received \$225; Martyn Beckett received \$750; Serge Demers received \$1950; Sarabjit Kaur and Mandy Nwobu received \$300, respectively; Kinga Petrovai received \$0; and Kyle Wilson received \$1350, for their governance work as part of the EQAO Board of Directors.

Mitigating Risk Across the Agency

EQAO ensures there are processes in place to control quality and mitigate risk that could affect the integrity of EQAO's assessment data, which is key to fulfilling the agency's mandate. Likewise, the agency's enterprise risk-management program applies to all other aspects of its operations, and every key decision is made with the consideration of potential risks and their mitigation. Risk-mitigation strategies are in place across the agency and are reported to the audit and finance committee of EQAO's board of directors quarterly and to the Ministry of Education annually. During this fiscal year, the agency focused on mitigating EQAO's digitalization and modernization risks and establishing resilient IT infrastructure and systems, along with updating several aspects of the agency's business architecture. Additionally, EQAO continued to leverage external expertise in the areas of privacy and cyber security to ensure the agency's programs adhere to the government's technical standards (GO-ITS).

Financial Statements: Year Ended March 31, 2022

This section includes EQAO's audited financial results for operations ending March 31, 2022, which were funded through Ministry of Education allocations.

Financial Statements: Year Ended March 31, 2022

Financial Statements of

EDUCATION QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

And Independent Auditors' Report thereon Year ended March 31, 2022



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INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT

To the Board of Directors of the Education Quality and Accountability Office

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of the Education Quality and Accountability Office (the Entity), which comprise:

- the statement of financial position as at March 31, 2022
- the statement of operations and accumulated surplus for the year then ended
- the statement of changes in net financial assets for the year then ended
- the statement of cash flows for the year then ended
- and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies

(Hereinafter referred to as the "financial statements").

In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Entity as at March 31, 2022, and its results of operations, its changes in net financial assets, and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian public sector accounting standards.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the **"Auditors' Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements"** section of our auditors' report.

We are independent of the Entity in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in Canada and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

KPMG LLP, an Ontario limited liability partnership and member firm of the KPMG global organization of independent member firms affiliated with KPMG International Limited, a private English company limited by guarantee.
KPMG Canada provides services to KPMG LLP.

Responsibilities of Management and Those Charged with Governance for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with Canadian public sector accounting standards, and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, management is responsible for assessing the Entity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the Entity or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the Entity's financial reporting process.

Auditors' Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditors' report that includes our opinion.

Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists.

Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the financial statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards, we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit.

We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.

- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Entity's internal control.

- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by management.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Entity's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditors' report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditors' report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Entity to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.
- Communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

The image shows a handwritten signature in black ink that reads "KPMG LLP". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style. Below the signature is a single horizontal line that starts under the 'K' and ends under the 'P', serving as a separator or underline.

Chartered Professional Accountants, Licensed Public Accountants Vaughan, Canada

June 8, 2022

Statement of Financial Position

March 31, 2022, with comparative information for 2021

	2022	2021
Financial Assets		
Cash	\$ 2,760,494	\$ 4,115,251
Restricted investments - board restricted fund (note 2(b))	8,542,011	8,477,991
Accounts receivable (note 3)	291,450	257,853
	<u>11,593,955</u>	<u>12,851,095</u>
Financial Liabilities		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	1,179,009	1,437,064
Net financial assets	10,414,946	11,414,031
Non-Financial Assets		
Prepaid expenses (note 4)	716,947	334,321
Tangible capital assets (note 5)	279,660	403,822
	<u>996,607</u>	<u>738,143</u>
Commitments (note 6)		
Economic dependence (note 11)		
Accumulated surplus (note 2)	<u>\$ 11,411,553</u>	<u>\$ 12,152,174</u>

See accompanying notes to financial statements. On behalf of the Board:



Chair



Chief Executive Officer

Statement of Operations and Accumulated Surplus

Year ended March 31, 2022, with comparative information for 2021

	2022 Budget (note 10)	2022 Actual	2021 Actual
Revenue:			
Ministry of Education:			
Base allocation payments (note 11)	\$ 28,002,615	\$ 20,836,604	\$ 20,224,072
Other	–	126,238	98,526
	28,002,615	20,962,842	20,322,598
Expenses:			
Service and rental	14,183,599	8,431,906	7,068,414
Salaries and wages	12,520,214	12,236,835	11,339,792
Transportation and communication	159,329	110,711	216,176
Supplies and equipment (note 5)	1,139,473	924,011	740,201
	28,002,615	21,703,463	19,364,583
Annual surplus (deficit)	–	(740,621)	958,015
Accumulated surplus, beginning of year	12,152,174	12,152,174	11,194,159
Accumulated surplus, end of year	\$ 12,152,174	\$ 11,411,553	\$ 12,152,174
Accumulated surplus comprises:			
Externally restricted		\$ 2,869,542	\$ 3,674,183
Internally restricted (note 2(b))		8,542,011	8,477,991
		\$ 11,411,553	\$ 12,152,174

See accompanying notes to financial statements.

Statement of Changes in Net Financial Assets

Year ended March 31, 2022, with comparative information for 2021

	2022 Budget (note 10)	2022 Actual	2021 Actual
Annual surplus (deficit)	\$ —	\$ (740,621)	\$ 958,015
Acquisition of tangible capital assets	—	(83,601)	(139,684)
Amortization of tangible capital assets (note 5)	221,241	207,763	204,224
	221,241	124,162	64,540
Acquisition of prepaid expenses	—	(716,947)	(334,321)
Use of prepaid expenses	—	334,321	462,990
	—	(382,626)	128,669
Increase (decrease) in net financial assets	221,241	(999,085)	1,151,224
Net financial assets, beginning of year	11,414,031	11,414,031	10,262,807
Net financial assets, end of year	\$ 11,635,272	\$ 10,414,946	\$ 11,414,031

See accompanying notes to financial statements.

Statement of Cash Flows

Year ended March 31, 2022, with comparative information for 2021

	2022	2021
Cash provided by (used in):		
Operating activities:		
Annual surplus (deficit)	\$ (740,621)	\$ 958,015
Amortization of tangible capital assets which does not affect cash	207,763	204,224
	(532,858)	1,162,239
Change in non-cash operating working capital:		
Accounts receivable	(33,597)	1,038,275
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	(258,055)	(644,301)
Prepaid expenses	(382,626)	128,669
	(1,207,136)	1,684,882
Capital activities:		
Acquisition of tangible capital assets	(83,601)	(139,684)
Investing activities:		
Net change to board restricted fund	(64,020)	(100,061)
Increase (decrease) in cash	(1,354,757)	1,445,137
Cash, beginning of year	4,115,251	2,670,114
Cash, end of year	\$ 2,760,494	\$ 4,115,251

See accompanying notes to financial statements.

The Education Quality and Accountability Office ("The Agency") was established by the Province of Ontario by the EQAO Act, June 1996. The Agency was created to assure greater accountability and to contribute to the enhancement of the quality of education in Ontario. This is done through assessments and reviews based on objective, reliable and relevant information, and the timely public release of that information along with recommendations for system improvement.

1. **Significant accounting policies:**

These financial statements, which have been prepared in accordance with Canadian public sector accounting standards, as established by the Public Sector Accounting Board of The Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada ("CPA Canada") and, where applicable, the recommendations of the Accounting Standards Board of CPA Canada, reflect the accounting policies set out below:

(a) Revenue recognition:

The Agency is funded by the Ministry of Education in accordance with established budget arrangements. The Agency receives base allocation payments in accordance with the fiscal year's approved budget. These transfer payments are recognized in the financial statements in the year in which the transfer is authorized, and all eligibility criteria have been met, except when a transfer gives rise to a liability.

Other revenue is recognized at the time the service is rendered.

(b) Tangible capital assets:

Tangible capital assets are stated at cost less accumulated amortization. Tangible capital assets are amortized on a straight-line basis over their estimated useful lives as follows:

Computer equipment	4 to 10 years
Furniture and fixtures	5 years

For assets acquired or brought into use during the year, amortization is calculated from the month following that in which additions come into operation.

1. Significant accounting policies (continued):

The Agency considers the carrying value of tangible capital assets when events or changes in circumstances indicate that the carrying value of an asset may not be recoverable or when a tangible capital asset no longer contributes to The Agency's ability to provide goods and services. If The Agency expects an asset to generate cash flows less than the asset's carrying value, at the lowest level of identifiable cash flows, The Agency recognizes a loss for the difference between the asset's carrying value and its fair value.

(c) Measurement uncertainty:

The preparation of financial statements requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities, disclosure of contingent assets and liabilities at the date of the financial statements and the reported amounts of revenue and expenses during the year. Such estimates include providing for amortization and impairment of tangible capital assets. Actual results could differ from those estimates.

2. Accumulated surplus:

(a) Externally restricted accumulated surplus:

The Agency receives base allocation payments in accordance with the year's approved budget. Actual expenses incurred in the year could differ from the budgeted amounts. The difference between base allocation payments received and actual expenses incurred are tracked separately as externally restricted accumulated surplus.

(b) Internally restricted accumulated surplus:

A board restricted fund was established by a Board of Directors' ("Board") resolution for the purpose of examining assessment processes and researching emerging methodologies in large scale assessment in order to maintain Ontario's high quality assessment programs as best of class. As at year end, the balance comprised of \$2,463,893 (2021 - \$2,449,171) in cash and \$6,078,118 (2021 - \$6,028,820) of guaranteed investment certificates with a maturity date of September 2022 and interest of

0.82% per annum. The Agency has the authority to retain any revenue that is not provincial funding according to the EQAO Act, June 1996, the Agencies and Appointment Directive and the Financial Administration Act.

2. **Accumulated surplus (continued):**

	2022	2021
Balance, beginning of year	\$ 8,477,991	\$ 8,377,930
Appropriation of other income	–	32,745
Interest income earned on funds	64,020	67,316
Balance, end of year	\$ 8,542,011	\$ 8,477,991

In a prior year, the Board approved a motion to fully restrict the internally restricted accumulated surplus for the Board-approved IT strategy.

3. **Accounts receivable:**

Included in accounts receivable is a transfer payment in the amount of nil (2021 - \$40,000) due from the Ministry of Education.

4. **Prepaid expenses:**

Prepaid expenses are paid in cash and recorded as assets before they are used or consumed. As at year end, the balance is made up of the following amounts:

	2022	2021
Prepaid expenses	\$ 163,532	\$ 124,296
Prepaid secondees	553,415	210,025
	\$ 716,947	\$ 334,321

5. **Tangible capital assets:**

			2022	2021
	Cost	Accumulated amortization	Net book value	Net book value
Computer equipment	\$ 1,144,855	\$ 872,285	\$ 272,570	\$ 389,003
Furniture and fixtures	374,154	367,064	7,090	14,819
	<u>\$ 1,519,009</u>	<u>\$ 1,239,349</u>	<u>\$ 279,660</u>	<u>\$ 403,822</u>

6. **Commitments:**

The Agency leases premises under certain operating lease arrangements with expiry dates up to December 31, 2024. Under the terms of the leases, The Agency is required to pay an annual base rent, which is predetermined based on square footage rates plus operating and maintenance charges. Future minimum annual scheduled payments are as follows:

2023	\$ 958,231
2024	752,381
2025	564,285
	<u>\$ 2,274,897</u>

7. **Financial instruments:**

The Agency's financial instruments consist of cash, board restricted investments, accounts receivable and accounts payable and accrued liabilities. Financial instruments are recorded at fair value on initial recognition. The fair values of these financial instruments approximate their carrying values due to their short-term nature.

It is management's opinion that The Agency is not exposed to significant interest, currency or credit risk arising from these financial instruments.

8. **Allocation of expenses:**

Incremental administration expenses are allocated to fee-based administration revenue. Expenses are allocated proportionately based on the number of individual student assessments administered.

9. **Liquidity risk:**

Liquidity risk is the risk that The Agency will be unable to fulfill its obligations on a timely basis or at a reasonable cost. The Agency manages its liquidity risk by monitoring its operating requirements. The Agency prepares budget and cash forecasts to ensure it has sufficient funds to fulfill its obligations.

There have been no significant changes to the liquidity risk exposure from 2021.

10. **Budget:**

The budget information has been derived from the budget approved by the Board on August 18, 2021.

11. **Economic dependence:**

The Agency derives substantially all of its income from the Ministry of Education in the form of base allocation payments. The Agency's ability to carry on operations, realize assets and discharge its liabilities depends on the continued financial support of the Ministry of Education.

Appendix: Performance Targets, Measures and Analysis

Digitalize and Modernize All EQAO Assessments			
Performance Targets			
Goals	Objectives	Performance Measures	Performance Analysis
A. Drive improvement in student achievement and well-being through large-scale assessment data.	Provide credible data to the education community to inform school board and student improvement.	Create, administer, score and report annually on the Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics, the OSSLT and the assessments of literacy and mathematics for primary and junior students.	<p>Successfully finalized and implemented the field testing of the online Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics and the OSSLT, which were administered in participating English- and French-language school boards; posted field-test findings on the EQAO website.</p> <p>Successfully launched both full-census secondary-level digital assessments in English- and French-language schools across the province.</p>
B. Transform provincial assessments to embrace the contemporary classroom experience and leverage technology to provide customized and	<p>Leverage new digital assessment models to provide a more relevant and engaging assessment experience.</p> <p>Ensure all digital assessment follow best practice for data quality and psychometric analysis.</p>	Transform the EQAO assessments so that they respond to each student's learning needs through the use of CAT (Computer Adaptive Test) technology and a testlet-based linear-on-the-fly (tLOFT) assessment model.	<p>Continued to develop a successful digitalized and modernized assessment program by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • securing a digital testing vendor; • implementing adaptive digital testing (multi-stage computer adaptive

<p>accessible assessments.</p>	<p>Enhance the reporting model to enhance the usability of the assessment results.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successfully procure a digital assessment vendor by September 2021. • Ensure that the new assessment model aligns with the provincial curriculum, and government direction, legislation and policy. • Ensure this model aligns with contemporary classroom practices and current technology. • Provide assessment windows that are flexible and better integrated into classroom instruction. • Ensure more timely and detailed reporting to support student achievement. • Develop customizable assessment tools that reflect the contemporary classroom experience and satisfy accessibility needs. 	<p>testing model, or msCAT) for the Grade 9 assessment and for the mathematics component of the elementary assessments;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • implementing the testlet-based linear-on-the-fly model (tLOFT) for the digital OSSLT and for the language component of the elementary-level assessments; • ensuring all online assessment questions are aligned to <i>The Ontario Curriculum</i> and Ministry of Education policies and initiatives, including new curricula that were implemented by the government during the fiscal year; • providing e-assessments that are accessible on multiple platforms, and ensuring security during assessment administration;
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve timelines for the reporting of results to stakeholders. <p>Establish a psychometric review team to work alongside EQAO staff to ensure data quality and sound psychometric</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • offering greater flexibility and a significant increase in the length of the administration window period, along with reducing the length of each e-assessment; • supporting the involvement of educators in assessment development, as well as in scoring activities, which are now offered through a digital platform; • implementing immediate reporting of individual student results for the Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics; • supporting professional development training in national and international digital assessment standards for staff directly involved in assessment development.
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		<p>practices for the digital assessments.</p> <p>Create, score and report on the Mathematics Proficiency Test (MPT), to new applicants to the Ontario Colleges of Teachers in alignment with legislation and government direction.</p>	<p>Created the Psychometric Advisory Committee to review and collaborate with the agency on best practices for the measurement and analysis of the digital assessments.</p> <p>Implemented the Power BI tool and dashboards to support the visualization of field-test reports and the upcoming release of 2021–2022 school-year assessment data for educators and the public.</p> <p>Successfully administered the Mathematics Proficiency Test (MPT) operational assessment from May 10 until December 15, 2021.</p>
<p>C. Support EQAO stakeholders through the digitalization and modernization of the assessments.</p>	<p>EQAO will establish resources and support materials for school boards, schools, parents and guardians and students to assist with the transition to the digital assessment platform.</p>	<p>Provide resources that include learning modules, webinars, videos, and other appropriate materials to support school boards and schools with the digital assessment administration.</p> <p>Provide digital sample/practice tests on the EQAO public website.</p>	<p>Supported the development of live interactive webinars for educators and IT school board professionals on all the new digital assessments.</p> <p>Completed and released products online that increase awareness and provide support, such as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • updated user guides along with sample and practice tests for

		<p>Provide resources for parents and guardians on the EQAO website.</p> <p>Support schools and school boards with data visualization tools through Power BI.</p>	<p>all assessments, to create a more accessible and user-friendly experience;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self-paced learning modules for educators to provide them with step-by-step guidance about assessment administration; • an accessible video for parents about elementary-level assessments, and helpful theme-specific frequently asked questions for all assessments; • an animated product showcasing and explaining EQAO's current digitalization and modernization initiative.
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Commit to Action on All Applicable Truth and Reconciliation Commission Recommendations and the Development of an Agency-wide Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Plan			
Performance Targets			
Goals	Objectives	Performance Measures	Performance Analysis
A. Enhance partnerships with First Nations, Inuit and Métis leaders to address the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action.	Learn about and understand First Nations, Inuit and Métis needs in relation to education and large-scale assessments in Ontario.	<p>By March 31, 2023, ensure there are Indigenous representation and voices on all EQAO committees as well as on governing and advisory bodies.</p> <p>By March 31, 2023, ensure EQAO team members are trained in anti-racism and aware of educational needs among Indigenous communities in Ontario. Learning will take place through</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meeting sessions with Indigenous communities. • participation in Indigenous events. 	<p>Recruited partners who identify as First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • participate in the EQAO Student Engagement Committee (ESEC) (students from French- and English-language school boards across the province). • participate in EQAO assessment and item-development activities and share their voices at assessment advisory committees. <p>Conducted seven live outreach sessions with First Nations schools across the province, and arranged for staff to participate in Indigenous education conferences and events to broaden understanding of</p>

			<p>Indigenous perspectives and realities.</p> <p>Launched a procurement to conduct an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) internal review of the agency and develop a multi-year EDI plan.</p>
	<p>Establish partnerships with First Nations, Inuit and Métis leaders to co-create strategies within the scope of the agency's mandate to address the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action.</p>	<p>By March 31, 2022, establish a working group with First Nations, Inuit and Métis partners to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> gather feedback on what education data are useful to them and how EQAO can assist with supporting their needs in education. direct research and the application of EQAO data as required and appropriate in service to Indigenous communities. 	<p>Currently establishing a working group with Indigenous partners to evaluate data usefulness and EQAO's role in further supporting students.</p>
<p>B. Develop and implement a multi-year equity, diversity and inclusion plan for the agency.</p>	<p>Conduct an equity, diversity and inclusion audit of the agency's work, including the agency's relationships with the field and its assessments, products and recommendations.</p>	<p>By October 31, 2021, conduct an equity, diversity and inclusion audit.</p>	<p>Selected a vendor (TMU's Diversity Institute) to conduct the EDI internal audit of the agency and to develop a multi-year plan.</p>
	<p>Create a multi-year equity, diversity and inclusion plan.</p>	<p>By March 31, 2022, launch a multi-year equity, diversity and inclusion plan that</p>	<p>Contract finalization is in progress with the TMU's</p>

		strengthens the agency's commitment to anti-racism, equity, diversity and inclusion both internally (with staff and management) and externally (with all stakeholders and the public).	Diversity Institute.
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Ensure Effective Governance and Engagement in the Agency's Operations			
Performance Targets			
Goals	Objectives	Performance Measures	Performance Analysis
A. Expand networks and partnerships to enhance EQAO's professional capacity and fiscal resources.	Refresh EQAO's stakeholder engagement strategy to address the goals and objectives in this business plan.	By April 1, 2022, refresh the agency's stakeholder engagement strategy in alignment with its operational goals. Maintain collaborative relationships with Ministry counterparts in alignment with the agency's Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) at all times.	Presented, to EQAO's board, a new stakeholder engagement strategy, which was approved in February 2022. Continued weekly and monthly communications with Ministry of Education counterparts across the finance, procurement, policy, program, information technology (IT) and communications areas.
	Identify future revenue generation opportunities for the agency.	By March 31, 2022, identify potential opportunities for revenue generation.	Researched opportunities for revenue and presented a briefing note to the Ministry of Education on the collection of fees for full-time fee-paying international students who participate in EQAO assessments at public and private schools.
B. Identify and address the implications of integrating	EQAO will establish a sector standard on the requirements and implications when	By March 31, 2022, EQAO will establish a policy and procedure that sets out the	Developed a decision note that includes analysis on the legislation, challenges and

datasets that result in meaningful public reporting.	integrating datasets for public reporting.	authority and requirements for legislative compliance in the integration of datasets.	opportunities associated with linking datasets (currently under internal review).
C. Engage effectively with stakeholders to continuously improve the agency's work.	Leverage the refreshed EQAO stakeholder engagement strategy to direct engagement with the agency's stakeholders.	<p>By December 31, 2021, EQAO will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • review and update its current stakeholder engagement strategy to identify strategic stakeholders, objectives and timelines. • engage all key stakeholders in alignment with agency goals and the objectives of the stakeholder engagement plan. • develop clear and compelling communication products for all channels to engage stakeholders and inform them of the agency's work and findings. • ensure use of stakeholder input and feedback for the agency's continuous improvement. 	<p>Developed and presented the EQAO branding strategy, communications strategy and 2022–2023 communications plan to the EQAO board of directors, who approved them.</p> <p>Continued to engage with the education sector by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • holding interactive and virtual meetings and webinars developed for specific stakeholders, including local school boards, faculties of education, and parents and guardians, to increase understanding of EQAO's new e-assessments. • presenting to a Quebec Ministry of Education delegation and a delegation from the United Arab Emirates to increase awareness and stimulate discussion

			<p>of best-practices in large-scale digital assessment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • holding regular EQAO Student Engagement Committee (ESEC) meetings and meetings of ESEC's subcommittees, to discuss students' experiences with the new online assessments, EQAO's assessment program and related communications. <p>Launched self-paced learning modules on EQAO's website and new courses on EQAO's virtual learning environment to inform about the new elementary- and secondary-level online assessments.</p> <p>Released, on EQAO's website, new user-friendly guides, frameworks and frequently asked questions about EQAO's new online assessments.</p> <p>Sent weekly and monthly memos and notices to the education community to</p>
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			<p>support the delivery of timely, clear and detailed information about EQAO's activities and its modernized assessment program and way of reporting assessment data and results.</p> <p>Created and refreshed sections of EQAO's website, and continued to release weekly social media posts on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn platforms, in support of assessment preparedness, key agency activities and key calendar moments recognized by a diverse and inclusive education community. These activities promoted stakeholder interaction and engaged more than 460 000 website visitors and drove an increase of 5% of followers across all social media platforms.</p> <p>Launched new Microsoft Power BI data presentation dashboard on EQAO's website to showcase the field test findings of EQAO's first online assessments in a digital, interactive and user-friendly way.</p>
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			<p>Leveraged external stakeholder feedback received during webinars and through questionnaires presented to students and educators during the administration of EQAO assessments to improve EQAO's assessment program and communications, along with the new e-assessment system.</p> <p>Created specific and timely messaging to inform teacher candidates of assessment changes and other news related to the Mathematics Proficiency Test (MPT), and updated MPT blueprints to reflect the implementation of the new Grade 9 mathematics curriculum.</p>
D. Develop and deliver an effective communication plan for each of the strategic priorities and goals.	Produce a communication plan for each of the strategic directions and goals.	Develop communication plans that outline activities for all the strategic directions and goals. In alignment with project timelines, include reporting on the metrics of communication products related to the strategic priorities and goals	<p>Developed and submitted a quarterly plan to outline the 30-, 60- and 90-day outlooks to engage stakeholders in accordance with the agency's strategic plan and key audiences.</p> <p>Shared website and social media metrics with key staff and the executive team, and</p>

		<p>promoted publicly and among agency stakeholders across all communication channels.</p>	<p>sent monthly CEO updates to staff to keep all apprised of key agency news and activities.</p> <p>Updated the 2021–2024 and the 2022–2025 business plans and related strategic priorities based on Ministry of Education feedback.</p>
<p>E. Ensure effective governance and business practices.</p>	<p>Ensure that the internal governance and operational policy frameworks support the agency’s operation in accordance with provincial legislation and government directives.</p>	<p>Maintain agency operations in alignment with EQAO’s governance and policy framework by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reviewing all EQAO policies, procedures, and guidelines to verify their alignment with provincial directives and legislation. • communicating and implementing measures outlined by the Secretary of the Cabinet. • integrating the enterprise risk-management program into agency operations. • updating the agency’s records management 	<p>Reviewed and updated all operational policies and procedures in accordance with their review cycle. Currently aligning policies with the digital operating model.</p> <p>Followed expenditure restrictions and procurement measures in accordance with government direction.</p> <p>Established risk programs to identify, mitigate and monitor risks associated with the modernization and digitalization of assessments, and assessed departmental and enterprise risks for the agency.</p> <p>Continued updating EQAO’s records management program, including the</p>

		<p>program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring business operations comply with provincial legislation, directives, and policies. • engaging with Infrastructure Ontario on future workplace planning. • establishing a process between EQAO and the Ministry of Education to bring visibility to how EQAO data and research are used annually by the government for improvement in education. 	<p>approval of its updated records series by the Archivist of Ontario.</p> <p>Ensured business operations complied with related provincial legislation, directives and policies, including aligning applicable EQAO policies with Government of Ontario Information Technology Standards (GO ITS) standards.</p> <p>Engaged with Infrastructure Ontario on workplace planning and the reduction of the agency's office footprint to ensure adequate support of a hybrid workplace model.</p> <p>Continued to share with the Ministry of Education in a timely manner the findings from assessment field tests and weekly MPT results.</p>
	<p>Ensure financial and acquisition accountability and exceptional service delivery.</p>	<p>Maintain accurate and timely financial reports based on Public Sector Accounting Board guidelines and have them validated by an external audit process.</p> <p>Monitor and report</p>	<p>Completed the fiscal year's financial audit with no issues identified by the external auditor.</p> <p>Prepared and approved the 2021–2022 budget based on the funding allocation</p>

		<p>expenditures every month and conduct an analysis of variances every quarter at a minimum.</p> <p>Improve efficiency of service delivery by implementing a new collection-of-fees system (credit card) for fee-based assessment participants.</p>	<p>from the Ministry of Education.</p> <p>Completed variance analyses and financial statements for all quarters, and shared reports with management.</p> <p>Developed a credit-card payment portal for the MPT.</p>
	<p>Ensure IT infrastructure and privacy and security posture are in alignment with applicable government standards.</p>	<p>Maintain an updated business architecture and ensure technological and process updates are captured in order to support program and process improvement.</p>	<p>Updated business architecture by developing and implementing documentation for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Power BI reporting tool; • digital scoring of assessments and data management; • the business to business (B2B) identity and access management solution in collaboration with the Community Services Information and Information Technology (I&IT) Cluster (CSC) and Information and Technology Standards (ITS).

		Strengthen the agency's I&IT infrastructure and related privacy and security posture by optimizing operations at the Guelph Data Centre in collaboration with CSC and ITS.	Continued to strengthen the agency's I&IT infrastructure by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • completing a full assessment of EQAO's data system and operations; • upgrading and improving the system to maintain defenses against evolving cyber threats, including completing threat risk and privacy impact assessments, along with penetration tests; • implementing data encryption to protect the privacy and security of the agency's data.
F. Foster a strong organizational culture.	Lead and encourage employee engagement, collaboration and inclusion throughout the agency.	Monitor and maintain facilities as necessary to ensure a safe and healthy workplace environment for all staff and contribute to promoting overall employee wellness.	Monitored and maintained facilities to ensure a safe and healthy workplace environment by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • keeping abreast of COVID-19 measures and changes, developing new contact tracing procedures and informing staff of important updates in

		<p>Promote cross-agency collaboration and alignment of work to the agency's strategic priorities.</p> <p>Increase staff knowledge of all departmental functions through all-staff meetings, lunch-and-learn sessions, internal resources and reference documents and feedback surveys.</p>	<p>a timely manner and as needed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • implementing a gradual and safe return-to-work strategy in accordance with public health and government directions, procedures and guidelines, and communicating with building management regarding facility repairs and maintenance. <p>Promoted cross-agency collaboration and increased staff knowledge of all departmental functions by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • planning, hosting and leading cross-departmental activities, and ensuring alignment of departments in the agency's business operations. • providing staff with the opportunity to offer feedback on requests for bids regarding the equity, diversity and
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		<p>Improve engagement for new staff in accordance with EQAO’s mandate by modernizing the employee orientation program and showcasing the work undertaken across all departments of the agency.</p> <p>Develop activities to ensure employees are engaged in the agency’s mandate and feel their needs are being met by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reviewing and acting upon the EQAO and OPS Employee Engagement Survey results. Reconcile any gaps in areas identified. • encouraging participation in agency committees. 	<p>inclusion audit and review.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • organizing lunch-and-learn information sessions around current education and agency topics, and conducting town hall meetings to update staff on agency news, including distributing surveys to ensure continuing improvement of all-staff internal sessions. <p>Continued to revamp and conduct virtual onboarding sessions for new staff, and researched additional platforms and solutions to increase staff engagement in onboarding and staff events.</p> <p>Leveraged results from the OPS Employee Engagement Survey to improve planning for the internal EQAO Employee Engagement Committee.</p> <p>Provided survey results to staff, and regularly disseminated documents</p>
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developing motivational presentations for all-staff events. • developing activities that engage all staff in agency-wide endeavours (e.g., all-staff day). • encouraging participation in EQAO and OPS events and professional learning initiatives in accordance with expenditure restrictions. • improving communication to all staff with respect to agency developments and future activities through monthly CEO updates, executive team office hours, interdepartmental meetings, operational meeting summary notes, etc. <p>Develop at least one activity a year that enhances one aspect of anti-racism,</p>	<p>and information about the OPS employee network to encourage staff to engage in agency and OPS committees.</p> <p>Enhanced aspects of anti-racism and equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in the daily work of the agency.</p> <p>Promoted cross-agency collaboration and alignment with the agency’s strategic priorities by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing training resources to staff to support better awareness of EDI and specific equity-seeking communities such as Indigenous and racialized populations.
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		<p>equity, diversity and inclusion in the day-to-day work of the agency.</p> <p>Promote cross-agency collaboration and alignment of work to agency strategic priorities by increasing staff knowledge of all departmental functions through all-staff meetings, lunch-and-learn sessions, internal resources and reference documents and feedback surveys.</p> <p>Ensure that working groups and committees (e.g., Accessibility Committee; Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee; Research Committee) report regularly to managers and teams on their work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • organizing anti-racism learning sessions for all staff. • sharing virtual anti-racism panel sessions with staff. • conducting internal sessions to share with staff new agency developments in EQAO data visualization. • ensuring that internal committees report regularly to management and teams on their work.
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