

Ministry of Education

Minister

315 Front Street West
Toronto ON M7A 0B8

Ministère de l'Éducation

Ministre

315, rue Front Ouest
Toronto ON M7A 0B8



March 24, 2026

Martyn Beckett
Vice Chair
Education Quality and Accountability Office
2 Carlton Street, Suite 1200
Toronto, Ontario
M5B 2M9

Subject: EQAO's Letter of Direction for 2026-27

Dear Mr. Beckett,

I am pleased to share our government's 2026-27 priorities for Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO).

Agencies are a part of government and are expected to act in the best interests of the people of Ontario. In a time of economic uncertainty, agencies play a critical role in supporting our commitment to Protect Ontario by improving service delivery, driving innovation, and ensuring responsible stewardship of public resources – all while adhering to government policies and directives.

In accordance with the Agencies and Appointments Directive, agencies are required to align their goals, objectives and strategic direction with our government's priorities. As Chair, you are responsible for ensuring that EQAO's business plan clearly demonstrates how the agency will fulfill these expectations. Progress and achievements must be reported through your annual report, and compliance with these requirements will be monitored and reported to Treasury Board/Management Board of Cabinet annually.

This letter sets out my expectations for 2026-27, with a focus on how EQAO will contribute to protecting Ontario by delivering better services and driving innovation and value for money.

Protect Ontario

1. Expand domestic partnerships within Canada, to promote the development of supply chains and economic opportunities across Canada and support economic resilience, particularly in light of ongoing U.S. tariff threats and economic uncertainty.
2. Procure from Ontario and Canadian businesses whenever feasible.
3. Provide economic relief for Ontario families, consumers and businesses by freezing government fees and fares, unless approved by the oversight Minister.

Deliver Better Services

4. Focus on a user-centered client/customer experience by simplifying interactions, improving satisfaction, and expanding and optimizing digital service offerings.
5. Identify opportunities to enhance efficiency, improve services, drive innovation, and achieve cost savings for the people of Ontario, including through the use of AI and other advanced technologies.
6. Eliminate unnecessary bureaucracy and red tape by applying lean methodologies or other modalities to achieve operational efficiency.

Drive Innovation & Value for Money

7. Find innovative solutions to use public resources efficiently and to effectively deliver on the agency's mandate while operating within agency's financial allocation, supported by accurate financial reporting, effective internal controls, and proactive fraud management practices.
8. Manage agency workforce with careful responsibility to stabilize expenditures and preserve long-term financial viability by:
 - strictly adhering to the hiring control parameters, including ceasing hiring for non-business critical and non-public-facing positions, including the use of consultants;
 - operating within a defined maximum workforce size (including consultants);
 - ensuring compliance with the Broader Public Sector Executive Compensation Act (BPSECA); and
 - enhancing productivity and efficiency by using technology wherever possible.

9. Create a span of control policy that recognizes different streams of work within the organization and sets minimum span of control benchmarks and provide it to the Minister for approval by March 31, 2026.
10. Provide to your oversight minister, the amended human resource policy, guideline or directive that adheres to the OPS in-office standard of five (5) days per week which was effective January 5, 2026, and work with your oversight ministry to address any office space constraints.

These are the government-wide commitments for board-governed provincial agencies. Please see the attached guide for further details of each priority and the accompanying outcomes and performance measures that can be utilised if measurements are not currently in place.

I am also sharing several priorities specific to EQAO:

1. Support the government's commitment to strengthen student achievement and return Ontario to the highest test scores in reading, writing and math by continuing to implement provincial, national, and international student assessments and work with the government to better understand why students are not meeting provincial standards and what more can be done to strengthen achievement.
2. Continue with the implementation and the delivery of the Math Proficiency Test (MPT) and work with the ministry to continue to refine the delivery of the MPT to improve efficiency and effectiveness, reduce red tape and minimize missed tests.
3. Work closely with the ministry and the Community Services I&IT Cluster to manage and address IT and system-related risks, including privacy risks.
4. Continue to meet revenue generation targets and explore further revenue generation opportunities.
5. Work with and support the recently announced Short-term Advisory Body reviewing Ontario's approach to Student Achievement & Assessment.

At our next meeting, I would be pleased to discuss these priorities, and I look forward to hearing how they will be reflected in the agency's upcoming business plan and in ongoing agency operations.

Thank you and your fellow board members for your continued commitment to the EQAO. Your work and ongoing support is invaluable to our government and the people of Ontario. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact Deputy Minister Denise A. Cole at denise.a.cole@ontario.ca.

Sincerely,



The Honourable Paul Calandra
Minister of Education

Attachment: Government Priorities for Agency Sector Chart

c: Dan Koenig, Chief Executive Officer, EQAO
Denise A. Cole, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education
Mersad Fard, Acting Chief Administrative Officer and Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate Management and Services Division, Ministry of Education
Yael Ginsler, Assistant Deputy Minister, Student Achievement Division, Ministry of Education
Rupert Gordon, Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Policy and Planning Division, Ministry of Education