



Auditor: Ministry of Social Services needs to address higher-than-average employee sick leave

REGINA, Sask., December 8, 2015 – The Ministry of Social Services needs to do a better job of minimizing employee absenteeism, says Provincial Auditor Judy Ferguson in her *2015 Report – Volume 2*, tabled today. In her Report, Ferguson notes that the Ministry had the second highest usage of sick leave among ministries within the Saskatchewan government, averaging 10.7 days in 2014-15 equating to an estimated \$5.6 million in salaries.

The Provincial Auditor notes that the Ministry had not yet determined the causes of its employee absenteeism. In June 2015, it began giving supervisors reports on employees with more than 10 days of sick leave, but not all supervisors saw these reports. “The Ministry needs to ensure that all supervisors are given quarterly reports that identify employees with higher-than-average sick leave to help them determine the reason for such absences,” says Ferguson. “Also, while the Ministry has a number of programs to support employee attendance at work, without assessing the underlying causes of absenteeism, it does not know whether its existing programs are sufficient.”

The Ministry of Social Services also needs to ensure all supervisors are better aware of the Attendance Support Policy and utilize the various attendance management strategies. For example, the Provincial Auditor found two instances where, contrary to policy, supervisors allowed employees to record absences due to family leave as sick leave in situations where employees had used up their available entitlements for family leave. “Better training of supervisors can increase awareness of policies and supports available to manage employee absenteeism,” says Ferguson. “They provide a basis for a culture of attendance and compliance.”

In the area of health care, the Provincial Auditor examined how well Prairie North Regional Health Authority prevented resident falls within its 14 long-term care facilities. Prairie North had generally effective processes to do so with several exceptions. In her Report, the Provincial Auditor states that Prairie North needs to establish a process to investigate significant resident falls, and link individual healthcare plans to identified fall risk factors. The Auditor found that almost one-third of residents who experienced a fall did not have a fall reassessment done. In addition, Prairie North needs to regularly carry out and document fall prevention safety checks, as 5 of 7 facilities visited did not do so. “Fall-related incidents are the leading cause of injury for seniors,” notes Ferguson. “Having processes in place to prevent falls is critical in keeping long-term care residents safe.”

Additional issues highlighted in the Provincial Auditor’s Report include:

- › Managing the use of social media at Tourism Saskatchewan
- › Promoting student health and fitness at St. Paul’s Roman Catholic Separate School Division
- › Addressing road safety concerns on Saskatchewan highways
- › Using unsupported IT systems at the Ministry of Advanced Education
- › Procuring goods and services at 3sHealth and Saskatchewan Polytechnic



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Further details regarding the key topics covered in Volume 2 of the 2015 Report can be found in the accompanying [Backgrounder](#). The full Provincial Auditor's 2015 Report – Volume 2 is available online at www.auditor.sk.ca.

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