



Provincial Auditor of Saskatchewan 2020 Report—Volume 2

Chapter 3: eHealth—Stronger IT Processes Needed to Reduce Health Sector Disruptions

Provincial Auditor Judy Ferguson reports eHealth must do a better job of controlling and monitoring IT network access, and testing disaster recovery plans. eHealth is responsible for managing an IT network with critical IT systems used to administer and deliver health care services in Saskatchewan.

During 2019-20, eHealth experienced a ransomware attack. eHealth did not pay the ransom, and recovered the IT systems from backups made prior to the attack. This recovery took time, and a number of health sector IT systems were unavailable for extended periods.

eHealth must do better at controlling and monitoring IT network access. Effective IT network monitoring helps detect and limit the impact of a successful attack on a corporate network. In addition, it mitigates the risk and extent of security breaches that can cause serious business disruptions.

eHealth has identified 38 critical IT systems requiring detailed recovery plans.

At March 31, 2020, while eHealth has a disaster recovery plan for seven of these critical IT systems, it has not completed disaster recovery testing for any of these 38 IT systems. Not having complete or tested plans increases the risk of not being able to successfully restore IT systems within a reasonable time. Delays in restoring IT systems could significantly impact the delivery of health services across the province.

“eHealth is responsible for managing IT services critical to the administration and delivery of health care services in Saskatchewan,” Ferguson said. “To successfully provide uninterrupted services, eHealth must have stronger security and disaster recovery elements in its IT infrastructure to prevent unauthorized access to the network, and limit the downtime from security breaches should they occur.”

Chapter 32: Health—Program to Improve Health Outcomes for Residents Living with Diabetes Underutilized

Provincial Auditor Judy Ferguson reports, a key IT system is underutilized by health care practitioners (physicians). This IT system, called the Chronic Disease Management—Quality Improvement Program, is designed to both promote the use of best medical care practices and track the care provided to Saskatchewan individuals living with chronic conditions, such as diabetes.

Because of the system’s underutilization, the Ministry of Health does not have sufficient information to monitor and analyze if care provided to those living with diabetes leads to better outcomes, follows best practice interventions, and prevents health complications. At March 2020, only 37 percent of diabetics have their patient care tracked in the Chronic Disease Management—Quality Improvement Program. The Ministry needs to do more to increase physician use of this key IT system.

The Ministry of Health also needs to undertake meaningful analysis about whether residents living with diabetes receive appropriate, timely health care services to prevent complications. Furthermore, it needs to analyze the effectiveness of programs and services delivered by the Saskatchewan Health Authority to people living with diabetes (e.g., extent of key diabetes-related complications such as amputations).

“About 96,000 people (over 8 percent) have diabetes in Saskatchewan; only slightly higher than the national rate of about 7.3 percent of the population. But there are some parts of the province, like areas in the north east and south east, where more than 10 per cent of the population have the disease,” Ferguson said. “Preventative measures and better disease management can reduce the prevalence of diabetes-related complications, the impact of the disease on quality of life and lead to lower health costs.”

When it comes to planning for disasters, like a IT security breach, consideration is needed of both prevention plans and what to do if a disastrous event happens.

eHealth’s Responsibilities

- Electronic health records
- IT systems for the Saskatchewan Health Authority, Saskatchewan Cancer Agency and 3sHealth
- Health Information Systems
- Health Registration System
- Vital Statistics Registry
- Primary disaster recovery provider for IT services for the Saskatchewan health sector



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Chapter II: Provincial Capital Commission Makes Some Progress on Recommendations Related to Major Developments in Wascana Centre

Provincial Auditor Judy Ferguson reports the Provincial Capital Commission has taken some steps to improve processes related to major developments in Wascana Centre—a large urban park in Regina surrounding Wascana Lake.

In 2019-20, the Commission developed an agreement template to guide future agreements with building owners of major developments in Wascana Centre. The use of such agreements would help the Commission facilitate control of building use and tenants to ensure conformity with the Master Plan. During 2019-20, no agreements were signed. The Commission signed two agreements with building owners in June 2020.

The Commission published on its website its process to review and approve proposed developments in Wascana Centre and periodic status updates on each major development project.

The Commission's Board has not yet clearly documented how major improvements and developments in Wascana Centre conform to the Master Plan, but plans to do so by publishing Board meeting information on its website. During 2019-20, no developments or major improvements reached the stage where this was required.

"During 2019-20, the Provincial Capital Commission began drafting but did not finalize procedures for public consultations," Ferguson said. "This would provide proponents with a clear understanding of public consultation expectations when major development projects are being proposed in Wascana Centre. In addition, sharing this information publicly would show the Commission is committed to obtaining input when making decisions about major development proposals."

The Provincial Capital Commission Act places the onus on the Commission and its Board to make sure major developments in Wascana Centre are consistent with the Master Plan.

The Master Plan is a public document intended to guide the future development and conservation of Wascana Centre.

Proponents (the party promoting the development) are responsible for leading public consultation. The Commission is responsible for determining if sufficient consultation occurs.

Chapter 19: Agriculture—Early Detection and Good Response Plans Key to Regulated Pest Management

Provincial Auditor Judy Ferguson reports Agriculture has, with some exceptions, effective processes to mitigate the impact of regulated pests in crops and pastures.

"Saskatchewan accounts over 40 percent of Canada's total field crop acreage. In 2019, the value of provincial agriculture and food exports was almost \$12.9 billion with value-added revenue estimated at \$5.2 billion," Provincial Auditor Judy Ferguson said. "Early detection and timely, appropriate response plans are key to controlling regulated pests and reducing their impact on the yields and quality of crops. This remains important even when a pest has not been detected in the province for several years"

The Ministry of Agriculture needs to proactively provide producers with written guidance about detecting and reporting the presence of late blight and bacterial ring rot, make sure laboratory results confirming the presence of clubroot are communicated to producers promptly, and revisit how it estimates populations of Richardson's ground squirrels (gophers) given the federal government's decision to deregister strychnine.

Regulated Pests—Crops at Risk

- Bacterial Ring Rot—potatoes
- Brown or Norway Rat—stored crops, especially grains
- Clubroot—canola
- Grasshoppers—cereal crops, lentils, flax, and pastures
- Late Blight—potatoes and tomatoes
- Richardson's Ground Squirrels (commonly called gophers)— native grasses, legumes, cereal, pulse, and canola crops



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While there is sufficient guidance on developing good response plans and reporting on Clubroot, more and robust guidance is needed for the remaining regulated pests. Producers are responsible for controlling confirmed outbreaks of pests. Good response plans provide written procedures designed to contain and control the spread, and minimize the impact of the confirmed pest.

Periodic reports to senior management would assist in assessing whether appropriate measures are being taken to control instances of regulated pests and prevent or minimize the risk of future instances. Appropriate surveillance and robust response plans are required even when the regulated pest has not been detected in several years.

The full Provincial Auditor's 2020 Report – Volume 2 is available online at www.auditor.sk.ca.

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