



## Provincial Auditor of Saskatchewan 2021 Report—Volume 1

### Chapter 8: Justice and Attorney General and Corrections, Policing and Public Safety—Implementing Strategies to Reduce Short-Term Remand in Saskatoon and the Surrounding Area

Provincial Auditor Judy Ferguson reports the Ministries of Justice and Attorney General, and Corrections, Policing and Public Safety need to do more to know whether their strategies are helping reduce the number of individuals on short-term remand.

Since 2017, these Ministries have applied three strategies to reduce the short-term remand population in Saskatoon and the surrounding area—Early Case Resolution, Rapid Remand Response, and Community Alternatives to Remand, and have expanded these strategies to other areas of the province.

By September 2020, they have not decided by how much and by when they expect their various remand strategies to contribute to reducing the number of individuals on remand. In addition, they are not yet measuring and reporting on how quickly, and to what extent their strategies are reducing the number of individuals in short-term remand.

Short-term remand is the primary reason for ongoing year-over-year increases in the average annual count of adults in custody in Saskatchewan, and presents challenges for the provincial correctional system.

Having set measurable targets, and collecting and analyzing key information from key external partners (e.g., policing services) would help them determine whether their strategies contribute to reducing the remand population, and make timely adjustments to the strategies, where warranted.

- Almost two-thirds of individuals admitted into custody in Saskatchewan are individuals held on remand
- Over 40 percent of the annual average daily counts of individuals in custody in Saskatchewan are individuals on remand
- Individuals on short-term remand represented an overwhelming majority of total remand admissions to the Saskatoon Correctional Centre in 2020
- Short-term remand refers to individuals held in correctional centres for 31 days or less
- Typically, time on remand is uncertain and frequently short in duration

### Chapter 10: Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority—Regulating Recreational Cannabis

Provincial Auditor Judy Ferguson reports the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority has reasonably good processes to regulate the distribution and sale of recreational cannabis. These processes are relatively new, and, as at December 2020, still evolving with the Authority focusing its efforts on educating retail and wholesale permittees about operating requirements. However, to effectively regulate the distribution and sale of recreational cannabis past the initial start-up phase, the Authority must decide when to shift its focus from creating a culture of compliance to taking enforcement actions on non-compliance.

Other improvements needed include developing a risk-informed plan for inspecting permittees compliance, finalizing guidelines for actions key to enforcing identified non-compliance, inspecting permittees as frequently as expected, and actively monitoring whether permittees sufficiently address identified non-compliance. Once it moves into taking enforcement actions, the Authority needs to keep senior management informed about the nature and extent of identified non-compliance, and related enforcement actions.

Cannabis use increases the risk of long-term brain impacts (such as mental health issues, especially for minors), and safety risks (such as driving impaired). Effective regulatory processes help prevent the sale of legal cannabis to youth, keep profits away from criminals and protect public health.



## Provincial Auditor of Saskatchewan 2021 Report—Volume 1

### Chapter 22: Saskatchewan Health Authority—Providing Timely Access to Mental Health and Addictions Services in Prince Albert and Surrounding Areas

Provincial Auditor Judy Ferguson reports the Saskatchewan Health Authority improved, since the 2018 audit, some processes for providing timely access to mental health and addictions services in Prince Albert and surrounding areas (the Prince Albert area). However, more work is needed to fully implement the five recommendations that remain outstanding.

The follow-up audit found the Authority has not formally assessed whether mental health and addictions services are meeting client demand in the Prince Albert area. For mental health and addiction clients, getting the right treatment at the right time is important to recovery.

The audit found mental health clients continue to wait longer than expected for counselling and psychiatry services in the Prince Albert area. While some wait-time targets for counselling and psychiatry services were met, others were not. For example, in 2019-20, more than 90 percent of children with moderate acuity level waited more than the 20-business-day target for their first psychiatrist appointment. This percentage had increased by at least 10 percent since 2017-18. Long waits can lead to people’s condition getting worse, and in some cases, waits can even contribute to death.

The audit found the Authority has not yet developed a strategy to collect mental health and addictions client-service information in its health record system from healthcare professionals outside of the Authority (e.g., psychiatrists, family physicians). Working with the Ministry of Health and eHealth on implementing a single electronic health record system with complete client history would help the Authority make necessary client information readily available to healthcare providers across the province. Also, having complete client-care information relative to needed mental health and addictions services would help identify changes needed to improve timely access to services.

Furthermore, the Authority needs to collaborate with the Ministry of Social Services about providing housing options with enhanced access for mental health and addictions clients. Stable housing can lead to better outcomes for people living with complex mental health and addictions issues.

### Chapter 31: Water Security Agency—Regulating Drainage

Provincial Auditor Judy Ferguson reports the Water Security Agency, since the 2017 audit, has continued to implement its new Agricultural Water Management Strategy. It finalized and implemented seven policies about regulating drainage, and gave staff additional supports to help them consider and document risks when approving drainage projects, and addressing requests for assistance when drainage problems arise.

However, the audit found staff are not always following the new processes. For over one-half of the 20 drainage approval files tested, staff did not properly document their assessment of risks to the watershed, and management could not explain why. Also, over one-half of the 16 request-for-assistance files tested were missing at least one key step in the update process.

In addition, significant other work remains. Other improvements needed include developing policies around wetland retention and water quality, finalizing the

- Three types of mental health and addictions services are available in Prince Albert and surrounding areas with most being available in Prince Albert: inpatient (in a hospital), outpatient (outside a hospital), and community rehabilitation and residential services
- Prince Albert and surrounding areas encountered psychiatrists shortages starting in 2017-18

- Saskatchewan has the greatest area of watersheds with no natural outlets in Canada resulting in agricultural drainage often moving water into local lakes, sloughs, or wetlands instead of a river system
- The majority of rural Saskatchewan gets water from aquifers
- Wetlands help to improve water quality and replenish aquifers, in addition to providing habitat for wildlife



## Provincial Auditor of Saskatchewan 2021 Report–Volume 1

Request for Assistance Manual, taking enforcement action when the landowners do not resolve drainage complaints in a timely manner, and actively searching for unapproved drainage in high-risk regions of the province.

Saskatchewan continues to have a significant number of unapproved drainage works. Leaving unapproved drainage works in high-risk areas increases the risk of flooding of neighbouring farmland and receiving water bodies; of water quality issues in the receiving water bodies; and of the loss of wetlands. Also, not taking timely, effective enforcement action against unapproved drainage works increases the risk of further damage to neighbouring farmland and downstream impacts.

The full Provincial Auditor's 2021 Report – Volume 1 is available online at [www.auditor.sk.ca](http://www.auditor.sk.ca).

*The Provincial Auditor is an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan. The Office promotes accountability and better management by providing Legislators and the public with an independent assessment of the government's use of public resources.*

–30–

For more information, please contact:

Judy Ferguson, FCPA, FCA  
Provincial Auditor  
Phone: 306.787.6372  
[info@auditor.sk.ca](mailto:info@auditor.sk.ca)

Maygen Ring  
Executive Assistant  
Phone: 306.787.6361  
[media@auditor.sk.ca](mailto:media@auditor.sk.ca)