



Backgrounder for Media Release

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Ministry of Education leadership is required to improve Grade 12 graduation rates

Graduating from Grade 12 is an important personal goal for individuals. The overall Grade 12 graduation rate also affects the size of the skilled workforce and the provincial economy. The overall Grade 12 graduation rate declined several per cent over the last five years. “The Ministry of Education needs to identify key strategies for improving the graduation rate,” said Lysyk. “It also needs to provide clear direction to school divisions on how best to implement these strategies.” The Auditor also calls for public reporting so parents can know how well their school divisions and schools are doing in achieving higher Grade 12 graduation rates.

The Ministry of Government Relations (formerly Municipal Affairs) needs to ensure that safe drinking water can be consistently provided to northern settlements

Northern settlements are unincorporated communities in northern Saskatchewan for which the Minister of Government Relations functions as the municipal council. The Ministry provides drinking water for some northern settlements from its own water systems. For certain other northern settlements, the Ministry obtains drinking water from neighboring First Nations communities. In both cases, the Auditor found that the Ministry did not have effective processes to ensure that residents of these communities were provided with safe drinking water. To provide safe drinking water, the Ministry needs to ensure it carries out and reviews all required water quality testing. It must ensure it operates water systems appropriately, including completing all required maintenance. The Ministry must also improve how it communicates about water quality and issues. “Unless the Ministry takes prompt action to address problems in providing drinking water, residents’ health remains at risk,” said Lysyk. The Auditor suggests that other communities in Saskatchewan may find the criteria and recommendations in this chapter useful in evaluating how they manage their drinking water. (Note: The Report identifies the Ministry of Municipal Affairs as the responsible Ministry. The Government reorganization announced on May 25, 2012 has made the Ministry of Government Relations responsible.)

The Ministry of Energy and Resources needs to do more to operate in full compliance with *The Pipelines Act, 1998* and *The Pipelines Regulations, 2000*

The Ministry of Energy and Resources did not have effective processes to ensure full compliance with laws for pipeline construction and operation. The increasing use and age of pipelines makes compliance with the laws that much more important. The Ministry needs to consistently review pipeline applications. It also needs to assess pipeline construction, verify pressure tests, and review operator processes for maintaining pipeline integrity and safety. The Auditor also points out that current laws exempt the Ministry from regulating the construction of flowlines (the smaller and shorter pipelines that connect wellheads to storage facilities). Since these can pose the same type of environmental and safety risks as pipelines, the Auditor recommends that the Ministry consider seeking the responsibility to regulate flowlines.

The Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority should document a transparent customer-focused liquor procurement strategy

The Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority (SLGA) controls the sale of liquor in Saskatchewan. The Auditor notes that SLGA needs to document a more proactive, customer-focused strategy for buying liquor and make its procurement approach and processes more transparent. SLGA's current liquor pricing policy does not provide it with an incentive to negotiate lower costs for liquor products. Under the current policy, lower costs actually reduce SLGA's profits which results in less money provided to the Government to be used for programs. SLGA also considers social responsibility in its pricing decisions. "It is important that information on pricing be transparent so that citizens can understand government revenue and policy decisions embedded in the pricing of liquor," said Lysyk. SLGA could also improve its procurement process by developing and documenting clearer listing and product mix policies, and clearer internal guidance on product selection. It could also be more proactive in investigating potential new product listings versus relying on suppliers to present new product listings to SLGA. Unlike some other liquor boards, SLGA does not conduct chemical analysis of liquor products to confirm that the products it sells contain the specified alcohol content and no harmful chemicals. It relies totally on testing by other liquor boards, but has no formal process to obtain the results of such testing.

The Ministry of Social Services needs to establish outcome measures for community-based organizations that deliver services to intellectually disabled individuals

The Ministry of Social Services uses 85 community-based organizations (CBOs) to deliver programs and services to about 3,900 individuals with intellectual disabilities. The Ministry needs to better monitor and evaluate how the CBOs deliver services to individuals with intellectual disabilities. The Ministry should also document how and why it selects particular CBOs to deliver services and how it decides how much money to provide them with. "Having effective processes to select, fund and evaluate CBOs will reduce the risk of intellectually disabled people not receiving needed services," said Lysyk. "It will also increase the Ministry's ability to confirm that money paid to CBOs is achieving the results the Ministry had intended."

Saskatchewan Housing Corporation needs to improve its processes for maintaining the 18,300 housing units that it owns

The Ministry of Social Services, through the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation (SaskHousing), supports about 30,000 affordable and social housing units throughout the province. SaskHousing owns about 18,300 of the units. The Auditor found that SaskHousing did not have effective processes to ensure that these housing units were being properly maintained. "We made a number of recommendations to improve SaskHousing's information about the condition of its housing and to strengthen its maintenance planning and reporting processes," said Lysyk. "Doing the right maintenance at the right time will help reduce the risk of health and safety problems for tenants, maintain property values, as well as avoid unexpected future repair costs."

For more information:

The full 2012 Report – Volume 1 is available online at www.auditor.sk.ca.

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