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News Release

Auditor's Report highlights important issues in healthcare, water protection, and reliability of the General Revenue Fund financial statements

REGINA, Sask., December 4, 2013 – Saskatoon Regional Health Authority needs to measure emergency wait times more accurately, says Acting Provincial Auditor Judy Ferguson in Volume 2 of her 2013 Report, tabled today. In her Report, Ferguson states that currently the Authority does not follow best practices when measuring emergency wait times. It needs to measure **total** wait times in its three city hospitals, starting from when patients first arrive in emergency to the time they actually see a doctor.

When patients arrive at a hospital emergency department, they are triaged (prioritized) based on the severity of their illness or injury – the most serious patients are treated first. Ferguson reports that wait time tracking should include **both** the length of time a patient waits to see a doctor after being triaged, as well as the length of time a patient waits to be triaged upon arrival. “Saskatoon Regional Health Authority has set a goal that by 2017, no patient will wait for emergency care,” states Ferguson. “To help achieve this goal, accurate data is needed to identify wait time issues and develop strategies to fix them.”

Also in the area of health care, Ferguson reports that Sun Country Regional Health Authority's two district hospitals had effective processes for managing medications except for three areas where improvements are needed. Ferguson recommends that Sun Country consistently follow its policies for accessing pharmacies after regular hours and disposing of medications. It also needs to document patient medication history and weight. Ferguson also recommends that Sun Country analyze medication errors and identify areas where mistakes are commonly made. “Medication errors can have serious consequences,” says Ferguson. “Analyzing the factors that contribute to these errors will allow Sun Country to help prevent and quickly address any issues.”

The Report also discusses how well two ministries protect Saskatchewan's water resources through regulating landfills and intensive livestock operations. Ferguson notes that the Ministry of Environment needs to do more to protect ground and surface water from contamination by landfills. “Ground and surface water contamination can have long-term negative impacts on both the environment and human health,” states Ferguson. “Therefore, it is critical to prevent contamination from happening in the first place.” Ferguson also notes that while the Ministry of Agriculture does a good job of overseeing the construction of livestock waste storage facilities, it needs to do more to monitor existing facilities to help prevent water source contamination and resulting threats to public health.

Finally, as outlined in previous reports, the Provincial Auditor's Office continues to report significant problems with the accounting used to prepare the Government's General Revenue Fund (GRF) financial statements. The Office has now, for the first time, issued an **adverse opinion** on the GRF. Adverse audit opinions are rare, and serve as a “red flag” to the public. The adverse opinion means that much of the information in the GRF financial statements is wrong and readers should therefore not rely on the financial results reported in these statements. Ferguson states, “We are disappointed that the Government continues to use the GRF financial statements as one of its main financial statements.”

Further details regarding the key topics and issues covered in Volume 2 of the 2013 Report can be found in the accompanying Backgrounder. The full *Provincial Auditor's 2013 Report – Volume 2* is available online at www.auditor.sk.ca.



PROVINCIAL AUDITOR
of Saskatchewan

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