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Backgrounder for News Release

Ministry of Justice – Rehabilitation of Young Offenders (Chapter 18)

Over the past several years, the Provincial Auditor has carried out a series of audits examining the Ministry of Justice's processes for rehabilitating offenders in Saskatchewan. The first audit looked at adult offenders in the correctional system, the second examined adult offenders in the community, and the next phase was to examine the Ministry's processes for rehabilitating young offenders aged 12 to 17. This audit was of particular importance as Saskatchewan has the highest youth crime rate in Canada at 3.1 times the national average. If a young offender does not receive the right rehabilitation services at the right time, they are more likely to continue to commit offences into their adult lives.

In order to conduct this audit, access was required to the young offender case management files. Federal law requires that the Office obtain this access through either a provincial Order in Council submitted to Cabinet, or an order issued by a youth court. The Ministry of Justice requested access to young offender files on behalf of the Office in an Order in Council submitted to Cabinet. However, when Cabinet approved the Order in Council, it did not include access for the Provincial Auditor's Office even though it included access for others, such as those working for the Ministry of Justice to conduct research and evaluation. The Provincial Auditor further notes that since Cabinet has the ability to grant the necessary access at no additional cost, she determined that it would not be a good use of public resources to spend the money required for her Office to seek its own court order to access the files. "This omission by Cabinet effectively denied us access to the young offender files we required to conduct our audit," states Lysyk. "Because of this, we were unable to complete the audit, and therefore could not determine if the Ministry of Justice had effective processes for rehabilitating young offenders."

University of Regina – Protecting Research (Chapter 15)

The core functions of the University of Regina are education and research. Provincial Auditor Bonnie Lysyk reports that the University needs to better manage its financial, reputational, and ownership risks as it advances and commercializes research. She states that while the University did have structures and processes in place to manage these risks, the University did not have sufficient understanding and control over certain aspects of research operations. As such, Lysyk recommends that the University formally clarify and communicate to staff its expectations and improve its policies and procedures on how research is carried out. Additionally, the University needs to ensure that research-related signing authorities are strictly followed to reduce confusion or error. It should also improve its research agreements, and do a better job of overseeing its rights and research interests.

Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Environment – Contaminated Sites (Chapter 10)

A contaminated site is an area that contains physical, chemical, biological, or radiological substances that could potentially cause or have already caused damage to the environment or human health. The Government of Saskatchewan is financially responsible for cleaning up contaminated sites in the province if it caused the contamination, or has accepted responsibility for it. However, the Government has still not completely identified all contaminated sites in the province for which it is responsible. "Without knowing where these sites are located, one cannot determine what public health and safety risks exist," states Bonnie Lysyk, Provincial Auditor. "It is also difficult to assess how much it will cost to clean up the sites going forward." The ministries need to identify all known and suspected contaminated sites in the province, and assess the degree of contamination – this will permit them to determine the

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risk to public health and safety. The ministries also need to develop appropriate cleanup plans, determine when cleanup needs to occur, and calculate the province's financial liability for cleaning up these sites.

SaskEnergy – Securing the Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition System (Chapter 19)

SaskEnergy relies on its Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system to monitor and control the natural gas transported to its customers through its pipelines. Provincial Auditor Bonnie Lysyk reports that SaskEnergy needs to improve the security of its SCADA system to better protect the availability, integrity, and confidentiality of both the system itself, as well as the data contained within it. She notes that although SaskEnergy has been providing natural gas in a safe and reliable manner for many years, a failure on the part of SaskEnergy's SCADA system could have an impact on the services provided by other utilities in the province. "The relationship between SaskTel, SaskPower, and SaskEnergy are interdependent," states Lysyk. "They rely on each other to provide their specialized services. SaskEnergy needs to better secure its SCADA system to help prevent any potential critical failures that could impact not only the services it delivers to the people of Saskatchewan, but the services that other utilities in the province provide as well."

Water Security Agency – Regulating Drinking Water (Chapter 17)

The Water Security Agency regulates the public waterworks that are responsible for providing safe drinking water to the people of Saskatchewan. Provincial Auditor Bonnie Lysyk reports that the Agency has several effective processes in place for overseeing waterworks, including issuing public advisories in a timely manner, posting inspection results quickly, and reporting regularly on water quality through its SaskH20 website. However, Lysyk notes that there are a few areas that the Agency needs to improve. First, to reduce the risk of water quality problems going unnoticed, the Agency needs to ensure that it is regularly inspecting all public waterworks in the province. Second, it should make sure that public waterworks owners who do not comply with permits are identified quickly and dealt with consistently. Finally, the Agency needs to coordinate with the Ministry of Government Relations so that public water systems are upgraded before new residential developments are completed. It should also develop an enforcement policy for public waterworks owners who do not upgrade their systems in time for new residential developments. "The Water Security Agency has a responsibility to ensure that permit expectations are met," states Lysyk. "This oversight is a critical part of ensuring that drinking water is safe in this province."

Ministry of Social Services – Placing Minister's Wards in Permanent Homes (Chapter 14)

The Ministry of Social Services intervenes on a child's behalf if the child is in need of protection. If a child has been under the care of the Ministry for more than 18 months, a court order is obtained to make them a permanent or long-term ward of the Minister. In her report, Provincial Auditor Bonnie Lysyk states that the Ministry is doing a good job of assessing and approving prospective adoptive parents and matching them with children. However, the Ministry needs to ensure that permanent wards are placed on the adoption list in a timely manner. "Children are less likely to be adopted as they grow older," states Lysyk. "To reduce the risk of a child's age negatively impacting their opportunity of finding a stable adoptive home, the Ministry needs to register children on the adoption list more quickly." The Provincial Auditor also recommends that the Ministry collect information on the outcomes of children in its care to help it determine whether its services are meeting childrens' needs over the long term.

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Ministry of Education – Physical Safety of Students at School (Chapter 13)

A learning environment that is physically safe is essential for students to be successful at school. In Saskatchewan, school divisions are responsible for student safety. Provincial Auditor Bonnie Lysyk reports that overall, Regina School Division No. 4 and Regina Roman Catholic Separate School Division No. 81 generally had effective processes for keeping children safe at school. Emergency response plans and procedures were current, physical education policies were in place, equipment was in generally good repair, occupational health and safety was routinely addressed, and school maintenance was well monitored. Although both divisions need to improve their monitoring and control of access to schools by those who are not authorized school personnel, they did a good job of ensuring compliance with safety initiatives, addressing safety-related complaints, and resolving safety issues quickly. "Overall, the results of this audit were positive," states Lysyk. "We hope that other school divisions in the province will use our findings to assess their own student safety processes as well."

Ministry of Economy – Nominating Qualified Immigration Applicants (Chapter 12)

The Ministry of the Economy is responsible for facilitating immigration in Saskatchewan and helping new immigrants settle and integrate into communities and workplaces within the province. Provincial Auditor Bonnie Lysyk reports that overall, the Ministry's *Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program* operates effectively. However, she notes three areas where the Ministry could improve its processes. First, under the entrepreneur and farm owner/operator categories, the Ministry needs to provide its staff with better guidance on how to assess an immigrant's plan on how they anticipate settling into society and establishing themselves and/or their business. Second, the Ministry needs to improve its documentation of the steps it takes to verify an immigrant's eligibility and qualifications. Third, Lysyk notes that the Ministry needs to update its policies on how files are selected for quality-control review to ensure that a variety of different files are looked at on a consistent and timely basis. "Part of Saskatchewan's priority for economic growth includes immigration," states Lysyk. "Therefore, it is important that the province's immigrant nominee program works efficiently and effectively to help streamline the process."

Regional Health Authorities – Board Governance Survey (Chapter 30)

Released at the same time as Volume 1 of the 2013 Report, are the results of the Provincial Auditor's board governance survey, titled *A Survey of Board Governance in Saskatchewan Regional Health Authorities – Practices, Issues and Opportunities*. This report, available online at www.auditor.sk.ca, provides insight into the perceptions of board members and their executives on a variety of governance areas. The importance of strong governance is also brought to light in Chapter 2 of Volume 1 of the 2013 Report, where Provincial Auditor Bonnie Lysyk reports that neither the Board of Directors of the Regina Qu'Appelle Regional Health Authority nor the Ministry of Health were provided with complete, accurate, or timely information on Regina Qu'Appelle's projected budget deficit. This situation highlights that improved oversight and dialogue between board members, executives, and government are critical elements of effective governance.

For more Information:

The full Provincial Auditor's **2013 Report - Volume 1** is available online at www.auditor.sk.ca.

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