



Better planning, monitoring, and action required to help reduce surgical wait times, says Provincial Auditor

REGINA, SK, June 19, 2013 – The Regina Qu’Appelle Health Region needs to improve its planning and use of surgical facilities, Provincial Auditor Bonnie Lysyk says in Volume 1 of her 2013 Report, tabled today. In her Report, Lysyk states that Regina Qu’Appelle needs to monitor and analyze the planned versus actual usage of its surgical facilities in order to use them more efficiently and effectively.

The Regina Qu’Appelle Health Region is the second largest regional health authority in Saskatchewan, serving a population of more than 260,000 people and providing surgical procedures for many residents of surrounding health authorities. The Provincial Auditor reports that better monitoring and analysis of the usage of its surgical facilities would help Regina Qu’Appelle identify and address factors that inhibit the efficient use of these facilities. It would also help it identify where, when, and whether additional resources are needed. “The efficient and effective use of surgical facilities is vital for providing timely surgical services to patients and reducing wait times in the region,” says Lysyk.

The Report also states that the Ministry of Education needs better processes around planning for new and existing schools. In Saskatchewan, school divisions make capital asset requests for property and equipment to the Ministry of Education in order to maintain existing schools, and to build new ones. Lysyk notes that a large portion of the province’s population growth in the last three years has been children in the 0-4 year age range – a trend that suggests that there are likely to be additional pressures going forward for adequate spaces in schools. Accordingly, Lysyk points out that it is not enough to plan for capital assets within **each** school division; planning must take place at a broader level **across** school divisions to ensure that the most important projects are completed first. Also, the way that school divisions obtain the funds for capital asset projects can have an impact on taxpayers. “If school divisions borrow from sources outside of the Government, they may wind up paying higher interest rates which ultimately results in higher costs to the people of Saskatchewan,” states Lysyk. “The Ministry of Education needs to consider all funding options before choosing a financing method.”

On the subject of advanced education, Lysyk reports that she examined the University’s processes for protecting its financial, reputational, and ownership interests as it fosters research and the commercialization of research at the institution. She notes that while the University has many processes and structures in place, effective protection of its interests will require changes to its policies and procedures, and better oversight.

Provincial Auditor Bonnie Lysyk also reports that her Office was denied access to information necessary to complete an audit on young offender rehabilitation in Saskatchewan. This audit – the last in a series of audits examining the rehabilitation of offenders within the province’s correctional system – was of particular importance, as Saskatchewan has the highest youth crime rate in Canada at 3.1 times the national average. However, Cabinet refused access to the information necessary to complete the audit so the examination was not carried out as planned.

Other areas highlighted in the report include:

- › The Government is in the early stages of identifying and managing the contaminated sites that it is responsible for cleaning up. It needs to assess all sites for risks to public health and safety, and determine what cleanup is required as well as the province’s financial liability for the cleanup.



- › The Water Security Agency needs to regularly inspect all public waterworks in the province to ensure that operators are meeting permit expectations and are providing safe drinking water.
- › The Ministry of Social Services needs to do a better job of following its policy of placing children on its adoption list within 120 days, and documenting permanency plans for permanent wards and long-term wards.
- › SaskEnergy needs to better protect the availability, integrity, and confidentiality of the system it uses to monitor and control the transportation of natural gas through pipelines.

The Auditor's Report draws attention to some positive audit results as well:

- › Regina School Division No. 4 and Regina Roman Catholic Separate School Division No. 81 are generally doing a good job of providing children with a safe physical environment at their schools in the areas of emergency response planning, policies over the use of gym equipment, handling of occupational health matters, and school maintenance. Nevertheless, the report does outline some recommendations for specific areas of improvement such as school access.
- › The Ministry of the Economy's *Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program* is doing a good job of nominating qualified immigration applicants who will contribute to the economic development of Saskatchewan, and become economically established in Canada.
- › The Ministry of Social Services is doing a good job of assessing and approving prospective and adoptive parents on its adoption list, and matching them with children.
- › The Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation is assessing program benefits and payments for producers under its Agristability Program in a consistent and fair manner.

Further details regarding the key topics and issues covered in Volume 1 of the 2013 Report can be found in the accompanying Background. The full **Provincial Auditor's 2013 Report - Volume 1** is available online at www.auditor.sk.ca.

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For more information, contact:

Ms Bonnie Lysyk, MBA, CA
Provincial Auditor Saskatchewan
1500-1920 Broad Street
Regina, Saskatchewan S4P 3V2
Telephone: 306-787-6398
Fax: 306-787-6383
Email: info@auditor.sk.ca