



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Backgrounder for News Release Provincial Auditor's 2014 Report – Volume 1

Ministry of Central Services – Information Technology Division – Data Centre Security (Chapter 7)

The Information Technology Division of Central Services (formerly ITO) delivers information technology services to primarily government ministries. Over the years, the Provincial Auditor's Office has made recommendations for the IT Division to improve its security processes. While the IT Division has made some progress, it still has not fully addressed the recommendations. As a result, the systems and data of various government ministries remain at risk of not being available when needed, being accessed without authorization, or being inappropriately modified. For example, in 2013, a government employee with inappropriate access to the data centre gained unauthorized access to servers that housed ministry data. "In this case, the intrusion was detected and changes were made to protect the data centre from future unauthorized access," states Ferguson. "However, the incident draws attention to the fact that the IT Division needs to take prompt action to resolve the security weaknesses we have previously identified."

Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission – Enabling Apprentices to Achieve Certification (Chapter 11)

Apprenticeship training and certification programs are a critical way of supporting the growth and sustainability of trades in Saskatchewan. Enrollment in Saskatchewan apprenticeship programs has grown substantially over the past six years; between 2012 and 2013, there were over 10,000 registered apprentices in the province. Acting Provincial Auditor Judy Ferguson reports that the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Commission had effective processes for helping electrician, carpentry, and plumbing apprentices achieve Interprovincial Standards "Red Seal" certification other than the following areas for improvement. First, the Commission needs to set and document measurable targets for its performance measures. Second, the Commission needs better reporting with respect to its interim progress and apprentices' on-the-job training hours. Third, the Commission needs to develop a formal, risk-based policy to determine which employers to inspect and how often, and verify that these inspections take place. Finally, it should also develop a process to ensure employers comply with program requirements, and follow its own policy on issue-driven (complaints-based) inspections. These improvements would help ensure that apprentices consistently receive quality training and support.

Saskatchewan Immigrant Investor Fund Inc. – "Headstart on a Home" Program (Chapter 12)

Low apartment vacancy rates and increased monthly rent rates indicate a need in Saskatchewan for more entry-level housing. To help address this need, the Saskatchewan Immigrant Investor Fund Inc. (SIIF) uses funding from the federal government to provide loans to homebuilders and developers to construct entry-level housing in the province – it calls this program "Headstart on a Home". Acting Provincial Auditor Judy Ferguson reports that SIIF is doing a good job of ensuring that Headstart is meeting the program's objectives. She offers one recommendation – that SIIF better define its performance measures and document its methods for calculating these measures. Ferguson states, "Clearly setting out these measures and how they were determined will help ensure that Headstart's performance is evaluated on a consistent basis."



Technical Safety Authority of Saskatchewan – Boiler and Pressure Vessel Inspection (Chapter 14)

Boiler and pressure vessel malfunction can pose a risk to public and environmental safety. As such, inspection of this equipment is an important way to minimize safety risks. In Saskatchewan, the Technical Safety Authority of Saskatchewan (TSASK) is responsible for inspecting boilers and pressure vessels. Acting Provincial Auditor Judy Ferguson outlines several recommendations for TSASK to improve its inspection processes. TSASK needs to develop a risk-informed inspection strategy, and establish written policies and procedures for following up on deficiencies identified during inspections. It also needs to formalize its process for clearing inspection backlogs, keep more accurate and complete inspection records, and more closely monitor the inspection activity of Quality Management System operators. Finally, TSASK needs to report to its Board and the Ministry of Government Relations on trends for regulated sectors, and the measures put in place to monitor trends and mitigate risks.

Ministry of Education – Grade 12 Graduation Rates (Chapter 19)

As communicated by the Government of Saskatchewan, improving the province's Grade 12 graduation rates remains one of its top priorities. This Report looks at the status of 10 recommendations made in the Provincial Auditor's [2012 Report – Volume 1](#) to improve the Ministry of Education's processes for increasing Grade 12 graduation rates. Of these recommendations, the Ministry has partially implemented three and has not yet implemented seven. While the Ministry has set targets for graduation rates, it has not identified key education strategies for improving student achievement and increasing graduation rates. Once these strategies have been determined, the Ministry needs to direct school divisions to use them, and analyze and report on their effectiveness. "The Ministry needs to know how it is doing in achieving its goals, and what factors are influencing student achievement and graduation rates," states Ferguson. "Without a detailed analysis of this information, it is difficult to provide the appropriate guidance and support to reach graduation targets." The Report recognizes the Ministry's plan to work on key strategies for improving graduation rates as it develops the Education Sector Strategic Plan.

Managing Risks of Public-Private Partnerships (Chapter 31)

Public-private partnerships (P3s) can be of significant economic and social importance, and present unique risks. For this reason, and in light of the Government's plan to increase its use of P3s, Acting Provincial Auditor Judy Ferguson has set out best practices for managing risks specific to P3s. Building on the Office's previous work in this area, the Report groups best practices into the areas that relate specifically to managing P3s. The seven areas are: accountability and transparency, capacity, assessment, meeting needs, risk transfer, innovation, and sustained monitoring. "To mitigate the risks associated with P3s, we encourage all government agencies to consider these best practices before entering into a P3 arrangement," says Ferguson.

South East Cornerstone School Division – Promoting Positive Student Behaviour (Overview by the Acting Provincial Auditor)

Promoting positive student behaviour is key to providing a safe and productive school environment that will encourage student success. In Saskatchewan, *The Education Act, 1995* makes school divisions responsible for setting policies for student behaviour. Given the importance of this area, the Provincial Auditor's Office commenced an audit of how a school division – South East Cornerstone – promoted positive student behaviour.

At this time, the Office has been unable to complete the audit as South East Cornerstone's Board has denied access to the information needed. The Board cited its responsibility to protect from public



disclosure private and personal information pertaining to students and their families, and a lack of proof of sufficient authority for the Provincial Auditor to access the information as its reasons for the denial. The Ministry of Education has asked the Board to cooperate with the audit and provide the Office with access.

Under *The Provincial Auditor Act*, the Office is entitled to have access to all information relevant and necessary to do its work. The Act recognizes that, at times, information the Office needs to do its job may be confidential or sensitive in nature, and includes protections to maintain the confidentiality of such information. The Office also uses additional safeguards to protect privacy; for example, ensuring sensitive personal information is not included in its files.

The Office has explained to South East Cornerstone's Board its authority under *The Provincial Auditor Act*. It has also indicated that it is not interested in private or personal student information and could do the audit without seeing student names or the detailed contents of related files. Rather, the Office needs to review evidence to see whether the Division's processes were used or worked as expected.

The Provincial Auditor Act and professional standards require the Office to report to the Legislative Assembly any refusal to provide information. Acting Provincial Auditor Judy Ferguson notes that the Office continues to work with the Board and the Ministry of Education to determine how best to complete this audit.

For more information:

The full *Provincial Auditor's 2014 Report – Volume 1* is available online at www.auditor.sk.ca.

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