



Auditor's Report highlights issues in health care and wastewater system regulation

REGINA, Sask., June 4, 2014 – To date, the Government of Saskatchewan has spent over \$500 million developing a provincial electronic health record that is not yet complete, says Acting Provincial Auditor Judy Ferguson in Volume 1 of her 2014 Report, tabled today. In her Report, Ferguson notes patients expect today's healthcare professionals to have ready access to key patient data when delivering care.

Patients access healthcare services from a variety of sources (e.g., doctors' offices, pharmacies, hospitals), and sometimes from different health regions in the province. As a result, patient data is fragmented, and not standardized. The goal of a provincial electronic health record (EHR) is to create a comprehensive repository of patient data that is relevant and readily accessible by healthcare providers anywhere in the province. Ferguson highlights four areas that eHealth Saskatchewan needs to improve so that relevant and timely information for patient care is readily available in the provincial EHR. eHealth still needs a multi-year operational plan to guide its development and implementation of the provincial EHR – the Office first identified this need in its [2009 Report – Volume 3](#). It also needs to manage and maintain all provincial patient data repositories and establish standard data requirements for those repositories, determine patient data critical for the provincial EHR, and ensure that it collects this information. "Providing healthcare professionals with complete, accurate, and readily accessible patient records is essential in providing patients with quality care," says Ferguson.

Also on the subject of health care, the Acting Provincial Auditor notes that Sunrise Regional Health Authority could do more to prevent and control infection in its fourteen long-term care facilities to protect the health and safety of long-term care residents, staff, and visitors. Serious infections such as *Clostridium difficile*, Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, and various respiratory illnesses spread easily through contact. Long-term care residents are particularly vulnerable to these types of infections due to their age, complex health issues, and shared living spaces. Ferguson identifies four key areas where Sunrise could improve its infection prevention and control in long-term care facilities. Sunrise would benefit from an improved training plan for staff, a more comprehensive infection prevention and control plan, and more consistent infection control practices with respect to hand hygiene, room cleaning, and laundry handling. Sunrise also needs to collect, analyze, and report on key infection rates and trends in its long-term care facilities. Ferguson states, "Improved analysis of infection trends would better enable Sunrise to determine appropriate actions to reduce the number of infections."

The Report also outlines important ways for the Water Security Agency to better regulate public wastewater systems so that risks to the environment and human health associated with improperly treated wastewater are reduced. The Agency needs to update its wastewater system design requirements and regulations to reflect stricter effluent (treated wastewater) standards coming into effect in 2015. It also needs to ensure that owners upgrade their wastewater systems for subdivision expansions, and report non-compliance with wastewater permits to the public. Finally, the Agency needs to better monitor mechanical wastewater system owners to ensure they sample effluent throughout the year and take timely action to avoid discharge of inadequately treated effluent. "Public mechanical wastewater systems discharge large amounts of treated wastewater into the environment," Ferguson points out. "Regular sampling is critical to help ensure that negative environmental impacts do not go undetected."



PROVINCIAL AUDITOR
of Saskatchewan

Further details regarding the key topics and issues covered in Volume 1 of the 2014 Report can be found in the accompanying Backgrounder. The full *Provincial Auditor's 2014 Report – Volume 1* is available online at www.auditor.sk.ca.

The Office of the Provincial Auditor is an independent office of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan. The Office serves the Members of the Legislative Assembly and the people of Saskatchewan by providing independent assurance and advice on the management, governance, and effective use of public resources.

-30-

For more information, please contact:

Ms Judy Ferguson, FCA
Acting Provincial Auditor of Saskatchewan
1500-1920 Broad Street
Regina, Saskatchewan S4P 3V2
Telephone: 306-787-6398
Fax: 306-787-6383
Email: info@auditor.sk.ca