



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Backgrounder for News Release Provincial Auditor's 2015 Report – Volume 1

Keeping People and the Environment Safe

Saskatchewan Government Insurance – Monitoring Certified Vehicle Inspection Stations (Chapter 15)

To help reduce the risk of unsafe vehicles on Saskatchewan roads, Saskatchewan Government Insurance (SGI) checks the driving condition of higher-risk vehicles through its vehicle inspection program. Currently, the province has approximately 930 privately-owned inspection stations and 3,500 technicians performing the work. Provincial Auditor Judy Ferguson reports that SGI did not have effective processes for monitoring vehicle inspection stations and offers some areas for improvement. Most importantly, she says that SGI needs to ensure it completes station audits as expected, including better documenting audit results. If results are not well documented and followed up, improperly inspected and potentially unsafe vehicles may wind up on the road. Also, SGI must identify inspection stations and technicians that are considered higher risk so that it can focus its monitoring in these areas.

Ministry of Environment – Regulating Wastewater Systems (Chapter 11)

Industrial activities such as mining generate wastewater that can be harmful to human health and the environment. In Saskatchewan, the Ministry of Environment is responsible for inspecting and regulating wastewater treatment at 165 industrial sites in the province. In her *2015 Report – Volume 1*, Provincial Auditor Judy Ferguson provides some ways in which the Ministry can improve its regulatory processes. For example, she notes that the Ministry should keep its records on the frequency of inspections up to date so it can ensure that inspections are taking place in a timely manner. As well, she reports that the Ministry needs to better document its inspections, providing details such as what specifically was inspected, and how the industrial site performed in each area assessed. This information will help direct future inspection activities, and protect against inconsistent site inspections.

Working with the Private Sector

SaskPower – Buying Power from Independent Power Producers (Chapter 17)

In order to meet Saskatchewan's power needs, SaskPower produces power itself, and buys power from independent power producers. Currently, up to about 20% of the province's power can come from private-sector suppliers. When buying power from the private sector, SaskPower uses competitive processes, but also accepts unsolicited proposals. Provincial Auditor Judy Ferguson reports that SaskPower's processes for choosing private-sector suppliers of power were generally good; however, it needs to make some key improvements. SaskPower needs to change its policies to require a more



thorough assessment and documentation of risks associated with obtaining power from private-sector suppliers. In addition, it needs to have a more consistent process for evaluating unsolicited proposals from potential suppliers so that they are given the same level of scrutiny as proposals obtained in a competitive process.

SaskBuilds – Evaluating Potential Use of P3s (Chapter 16)

The Government of Saskatchewan, like many other provinces, plans to increase its use of public-private partnerships (P3s) for infrastructure projects. Provincial Auditor Judy Ferguson examined the initial or beginning stage (called the “business case development” stage) of SaskBuild’s processes for deciding on P3 approaches, and reports several areas for improvement. For example, the Provincial Auditor notes that SaskBuilds did not include a “cushion” or threshold amount for how much cheaper a P3 should be than a conventional approach to deem it a better option. This cushion is needed to reduce the risk of the Government deciding to use a P3 that turns out to be, given the uncertainties, not that much cheaper than a conventional method, or even possibly more expensive. Also, when evaluating risks associated with P3s, SaskBuilds needs to more consistently use information from past projects during its assessment process. This information will help facilitate more informed decision-making.

Education Planning

Ministry of the Economy – Coordinating English-Language Programs (Chapter 8)

According to the 2011 census, approximately 7.6% of Saskatchewan’s total population is immigrants. To help them settle and find employment in the province, both the federal and provincial governments fund English-language programs for recent immigrants over the age of 18. In her *2015 Report – Volume 1*, Provincial Auditor Judy Ferguson notes that the Ministry of the Economy does not have enough information about federally-funded English-language programs in the province. More information will help guide the Ministry’s decisions on the programs it offers. In addition, the Provincial Auditor reports that the Ministry needs to improve its oversight of the province’s English-language programs to ensure that they are performing as expected.

Ministry of Education – Putting into Operation the Education Sector-Wide Strategic Plan (Chapter 9)

In 2013, the Ministry of Education made significant changes to its strategic planning process, which resulted in a single, sector-wide strategic plan for the Prekindergarten to Grade 12 education sector. Provincial Auditor Judy Ferguson reports that both the Ministry and the education sector have made substantial progress in their first year of implementing the sector-wide plan, noting that it is a significant step to achieve collaboration between all school divisions and First Nations and Métis partners. To support timely coordination of effort within the sector, the Provincial Auditor recommends that the Ministry review the action plans developed by school divisions to support the sector-wide plan’s goals. As well, the Provincial Auditor reports that the Ministry needs to set a deadline for when the school division action plans must be complete.



For More Information

The full *Provincial Auditor's 2015 Report – Volume 1*, which includes details on all of the Provincial Auditor's recommendations, is available online at www.auditor.sk.ca.

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