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**News Release**

## **Auditor: Support and better analysis needed to reduce employee absenteeism in Heartland Regional Health Authority and Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation**

**REGINA, Sask., December 12, 2017** – While Heartland Regional Health Authority and Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation had programs and policies in place to help minimize employee absenteeism, they both have more work to do, says Provincial Auditor Judy Ferguson in her *2017 Report – Volume 2*, tabled today. Both Heartland and SaskGaming operate in environments, which if not carefully managed, can lead to excessive employee absenteeism. Many of their staff work shifts and provide physically demanding services.

Effectively managing employee absenteeism helps agencies to deliver quality services, minimizes costs, and supports employee well-being. Not managing employee absenteeism well increases costs, which can include wages paid to absent and replacement workers, and costs related to employee well-being (stress, productivity, workplace safety, and morale). “While organizations will always have employee absenteeism, organizations must make sure attendance support programs are used and that those programs address the underlying reasons for excessive employee absenteeism,” says Ferguson.

### **Heartland Regional Health Authority**

In 2016-17, Heartland had the 7<sup>th</sup> highest amount of sick leave per full-time equivalent (FTE) position (i.e., about 10.5 days per FTE position per year) among the 12 Saskatchewan regional health authorities. It employed staff in over 1,100 FTE positions at a cost of over \$84 million. It operates in rural Saskatchewan.

While Heartland did a good job of providing employees and managers with clear expectations about employee attendance and had absenteeism support policies and programs in place, managers were not always applying them as intended. Its absenteeism support strategies were not improving employee attendance. At March 2017, the average sick leave per FTE in almost 90% of its facilities was in excess of its sick-leave target of 64 hours per FTE. Heartland has not met its sick leave target since 2010.

To reduce its sick leave, Provincial Auditor Judy Ferguson recommends that Heartland better support its managers in managing employee absenteeism. The audit found managers, in some cases, oversaw more than 80 employees of which many had excessive absenteeism. Better leveraging the role of human resource personnel in promoting employee attendance could reduce the workload for managers, and enable more timely addressing of reasons for excessive absenteeism.

### **Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation**

In 2016-17, SaskGaming staff were, on average, absent about 8.3% of their total working hours because of unscheduled paid and unpaid leaves. SaskGaming operates two casinos, located in Regina and Moose Jaw, and employs over 800 people at an annual cost of about \$37 million. Employee absenteeism reduces its profits, which support Indigenous and other communities.

Like Heartland, SaskGaming has programs in place for employees with excessive absenteeism. In addition, it used on-the-job training and attendance management information to reinforce its attendance



expectations. Its employee attendance improved over the last four years, but not as fast as SaskGaming expected. It did not meet its annual absenteeism target of 8.0% and long-term target of 5.5%.

To further reduce absenteeism, Provincial Auditor Judy Ferguson recommends SaskGaming better identify reasons for employee absenteeism, and analyze employee absenteeism trends and behaviours. The audit found managers did not always refer employees with excessive absenteeism to its attendance management programs or document why not. Having documented reasons for not referring employees to attendance management programs and analysis of employee attendance patterns would help SaskGaming ensure managers focus their efforts in the right places. In addition, it would help SaskGaming to determine whether its current attendance management programs are doing enough to address the root causes of absenteeism.

“With the Government’s focus on controlling costs and the transition of the 12 regional health authorities into the Saskatchewan Health Authority, it is more important than ever to manage employee absenteeism well,” says Ferguson.

Additional issues highlighted in the Provincial Auditor’s Report include:

- › Mitigating the risk of livestock disease at the Ministry of Agriculture
- › Detecting wildfires at the Ministry of Environment
- › Regulating meat safety at the ministries of Health and Agriculture
- › Rehabilitating adult offenders at the Ministry of Justice
- › Supporting the management of Provincial Court workloads at the Ministry of Justice

Further details regarding the key topics covered in Volume 2 of the 2017 Report can be found in the accompanying [Backgrounder](#). The full Provincial Auditor’s 2017 Report – Volume 2 is available online at [www.auditor.sk.ca](http://www.auditor.sk.ca).

*The Provincial Auditor is an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan. The Office promotes accountability and better management by providing Legislators and the public with an independent assessment of the government’s use of public resources.*

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