



Auditor: Water Security Agency has work to do to better regulate drainage in the southeastern part of the province

REGINA, Sask., June 7, 2018 – In her *2018 Report – Volume 1*, Chapter 12, Provincial Auditor Judy Ferguson reports the Water Security Agency has significant work to do to bring unapproved drainage works into compliance. Existing unapproved drainage works, particularly those located in areas at higher risk of flooding, can cause damage and lead to loss of wetlands.

Drainage works are any human-made activity intended to remove or reduce water on land or just below the land surface. Saskatchewan has between 1.6 million and 2.4 million acres of land with unapproved drainage works.

The Water Security Agency is responsible for regulating drainage including assessing and approving drainage works. Since 2015, all drainage works (regardless of the year constructed) require, by law, the Agency's approval. Currently, the majority of drainage works in the province are unapproved

Provincial Auditor Judy Ferguson reports that the Agency was in early stages of implementing a new strategy to encourage effective drainage and protect the environment. The new strategy sets a new direction for the Agency—it requires greater consideration of the downstream implications of drainage and water flows before approving drainage works, allows for co-ordination of drainage works, and encourages wetland preservation.

Under its new strategy, the Agency is actively educating landowners about the new requirements, and assisting them in applying for approval of new or existing unapproved drainage works. However, the audit found the Agency was not always following its revised drainage approval processes, or completing all of the steps outlined in its new policies (many of which are not yet finalized).

For example, over one-third of drainage application approvals tested did not clearly document staff's assessment of risks of the potential drainage works (e.g., downstream impacts). In another example, the Agency did not take timely enforcement action on an unapproved drainage work. In this case, six months after the Agency had ordered a landowner to rectify a drainage issue, staff had not yet set steps to reach compliance by the landowner.

Even though its draft policies placed priority on drainage works located in areas at higher risk of flooding, the Agency did not yet have a set timeframe for when it planned to identify them, and bring them into compliance or close them. It also did not yet have expected timeframes to resolve requests for assistance (complaints) on unapproved drainage works.

The Agency needs to report more information, such as the number of proposed drainage approval applications received and approved, and the average time it takes to bring drainage works into compliance. This would help the public and more specifically, landowners, to understand the Agency's new strategy and its progress made in implementing it.



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

- › Providing timely access to mental health and addictions services in the former Prince Albert Parkland Regional Health Authority (Chapter 8)
- › Providing primary medical care in adult secure-custody correctional centres at the Ministry of Corrections and Policing (Chapter 3)
- › Supporting students with intensive needs at Saskatoon School Division No. 13 (Chapter 11)
- › Monitoring the progress of home-based learners at Prairie Valley School Division No. 208 (Chapter 7)
- › Managing future cleanup of oil and gas wells at the Ministry of Energy and Resources (Chapter 17)
- › Regulating oil, gas, and pipeline industry incidents by the Ministry of Energy and Resources (Chapter 4)
- › Delivering the impaired driver treatment program at the Saskatchewan Impaired Driver Treatment Centre (Chapter 9)

Further details regarding the key topics covered in Volume 1 of the 2018 Report can be found in the accompanying [media releases and backgrounder](#). The full Provincial Auditor's 2018 Report – Volume 1 is available online at www.auditor.sk.ca.

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