



Provincial Auditor's 2023 Report—Volume 1

Chapter 4: Ministry of Highways—Conducting Winter Maintenance on Provincial Highways

Provincial Auditor Tara Clemett reports that the Ministry of Highways has effective processes to conduct winter maintenance, with a few areas for improvement. It needs to sufficiently track whether snowplow and grader operators meet work scheduling safety requirements, or waive the mandatory rest period. Equipment operators who waive mandatory 10-hour rest periods may become fatigued, increasing the risk of causing collisions. Tracking is imperative for the safety of the operators and others on provincial highways.

In addition, the Ministry needs to clarify terminology on the Highway Hotline to allow for consistent and informed decisions about winter driving conditions on highways, and report instances to management timely when snow is not cleared from highways as quickly as it should be, so resource adjustments can be made.

- 26,500 kilometers of provincial highways; almost \$60 million spent on winter maintenance in 2021–22
- The highest service level is to have snow removed from highway driving lanes and assessed for ice control within six hours of a storm ending; Highways reported 16 instances where this service level was not met.

Chapter 6: Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board—Monitoring Safety Associations' Use of Funding

Saskatchewan ranks the highest in Canada with 4.4 workplace deaths per 100,000 full-time equivalent employees. Provincial Auditor Tara Clemett examined WCB's processes to monitor safety associations' use of funding for injury prevention and workplace safety. WCB collects premiums from employer members to fund the operations of safety associations (over \$11 million in 2022) and must oversee that the funding provided is used for intended purposes (e.g., safety training).

The audit found WCB needs to verify that safety associations provide key information to employer members, as well as set more detailed expectations on eligible costs—what does WCB consider ineligible for funding use (e.g., alcohol purchases, gifts) that do not contribute to reducing injury rates. In addition, WCB should formally review key financial information (e.g., budgets) to confirm whether safety associations plan to use funding as WCB expects. It should also evaluate safety associations' planned performance (e.g., reduced injury rates for certain employer members) against actual results. Five of seven industries represented by safety associations had a higher injury rate than the overall provincial injury rate of 4.33 per 100 workers in 2022. Periodic evaluations can identify issues and allow actions to be taken to address them.

Chapter 26: Water Security Agency—Regulating Water Use

The Water Security Agency is responsible for monitoring water allocation and usage to ensure a sustainable water supply in Saskatchewan by issuing water-use licenses. Provincial Auditor Tara Clemett first examined the Water Security Agency's processes to regulate water use in 2020 and made seven recommendations. By March 2023, the Agency implemented two recommendations, partially implemented one recommendation, and did not make significant progress on four other recommendations, namely implementing written procedures about recording water use, and monitoring whether more than 16,000 water-use licensees comply with key water-use licence conditions.

We found Agency staff did not clearly document their considerations when estimating water use for licensees. Inconsistent estimates about water use reduces the ability to assess whether licensees comply with approved annual water allocations.

Furthermore, not actively monitoring water-use licensees' compliance with conditions may result in licensees using more water than allocated. This can result in a number of risks, including:

- The Agency making inappropriate decisions on water allocation
- Water not available for other licensed water users
- The environment negatively impacted if usage reduces a water source more than planned or entirely depletes it
- Water body sustainability being jeopardized

The full Provincial Auditor's 2023 Report – Volume 1 available online at auditor.sk.ca



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-30-

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