



Provincial Auditor's 2023 Report – Volume 2

Chapters 1 and 13: eHealth Saskatchewan—Proper Recovery Testing and Maintenance Essential for Key Healthcare IT Servers

- 97% of servers we tested that receive ongoing updates from vendors were up-to-date
- 20 of 341 servers tested ran unsupported operating systems
- 16 servers were not included in vulnerability scans

As ransomware and cyberattacks steadily increase, IT service providers like eHealth need tested disaster recovery plans to enable speedy and easy recovery of key systems and data from the point of attack. eHealth manages the health sector IT network, including more than 5,000 servers and over 1,000 applications, with a significant amount of private and confidential data.

In Chapter 1, Provincial Auditor Tara Clemett found eHealth has not sufficiently tested its recovery plans to ensure it can restore critical IT systems it manages for the health sector when a disaster occurs. Disaster recovery testing verifies eHealth can successfully implement plans and restore critical IT systems quickly.

During 2022–23, eHealth focused its efforts on developing a five-year Disaster Recovery Roadmap that included assessing potential risks to IT systems and establishing appropriate measures for recovery. We expect eHealth to begin disaster recovery testing (e.g., full backup restores) when its Roadmap is complete. Without fully tested disaster recovery plans, eHealth, the Saskatchewan Health Authority, Saskatchewan Cancer Agency, and the Ministry of Health may not be able to restore their critical IT systems and data (such as the personal health registration system or provincial lab systems) in a timely manner in the event of a disaster.

Also, as outlined in Chapter 13, eHealth has more work to do to protect critical IT systems from known vulnerabilities. Without proper maintenance of IT servers, eHealth may be at risk of system failures and security breaches. The audit found eHealth needs to track which critical IT systems are on which servers, detect and remove any unauthorized IT servers on the network, and implement security measures for unsupported servers. eHealth should also regularly analyze security information logged for key IT servers and report on significant IT server maintenance risks, as well as periodically review privileged-user access to IT servers. The availability and integrity of critical IT systems is integral to healthcare providers making medical decisions for their patients.

Chapter 15: Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission—More Apprentices from Underrepresented Groups Required

Saskatchewan will need more than 8,000 new apprentices and 5,000 new journeypersons to meet labour demand requirements between now and 2026, yet the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission projects new apprenticeship registrations and completions will be below market demand leaving a market gap of about 1,000 new apprentices and 1,000 new journeypersons.

The audit found that the Commission needs to:

- Revise its current targets related to female apprentices and identify actions to increase the number of female apprentices
- Seek more input from underrepresented apprentices to help identify and address barriers they face and to attract, and improve the apprenticeship experience for, these groups
- Implement actions to address key barriers (e.g., sexual harassment/discrimination in the workplace) underrepresented apprentices face
- Expand its targets to include all key milestones of the apprenticeship program for underrepresented groups (e.g., expected number of new registrants and expected exam pass rates)
- Analyze why underrepresented group targets are not met
- Pursue visible minority representation on the Commission's Board

- Underrepresented groups include: women, Indigenous persons, visible minorities, and people with disabilities.
- 40% of total new registrants from underrepresented groups in 2022–23.
- Targeting for 11% female apprentices in skilled trades, yet females represent 49% of the provincial workforce.
- Visible minority apprentice registrants declined by 59% between 2021–23. No visible minority representation on the Board.
- Between 2012–16, less than 40% of Indigenous apprentices received certification even though about 75% progress in their apprenticeship. Root cause of low certification rate not analyzed.



Chapter 8: Saskatchewan Health Authority—Lessons Learned Report Necessary for Unsuccessful AIMS Implementation

Provincial Auditor Tara Clemett continues to monitor the Authority's progress on implementing its Administrative Information Management System (AIMS) during each annual integrated audit. The Authority went live with AIMS in November 2022, but an unsuccessful implementation caused the Authority to revert to its existing systems. The AIMS Executive Steering Committee took steps to identify factors contributing to the failed system implementation—including the identification of issues surrounding staff scheduling, payroll time entry, and system performance.

It will be very important for the Committee to facilitate completion of a formal lessons learned report for the AIMS project as a whole once the project is complete. Documenting and sharing such information with other government agencies leading significant projects can help to avoid system implementation failures on similar projects.

- AIMS implementation failed November 2022
- AIMS development started in 2018 with total anticipated project cost of about \$86 million; \$157 million spent on AIMS by March 31, 2023
- Nearly \$240 million forecasted to implement AIMS at March 2023
- Next implementation date not set at March 2023

Chapter 25: Saskatchewan Health Authority—Better Oversight of Contracted Special-Care Homes in Saskatoon and Surrounding Area Needed

Private operators of special-care homes in Saskatoon and surrounding area continue to struggle with meeting existing performance measures and service expectations related to quality of care set by the Ministry of Health and the Saskatchewan Health Authority (see **Table 1**). This is similar to our findings in 2017 and 2019—in fact, we found results for special-care homes in the Saskatoon area worsened since 2019 for three measures (i.e., residents in daily physical restraints, use of antipsychotics, and newly occurring pressure ulcers). For example, the number of residents on antipsychotic drugs without a diagnosis did not meet the expected target (27%). This is often an indicator that special-care home staff chemically manage their residents. Failure by the Saskatchewan Health Authority to address special-care homes' non-compliance with performance measures and targets can negatively impact residents' quality of life.

The Authority also needs to clarify accountability relationships between itself, special-care home representatives, and the Ministry of Health, as well as define service expectations and improve associated performance measures for private operators of special-care homes. We found the Authority has yet to significantly change its performance measures for special-care homes since our 2017 audit. The existing performance measures provide little insight into how special-care homes meet the expected care practices set out in the Ministry of Health's *Program Guidelines for Special-care Homes*.

Table 1—Number of Special-care Homes in Saskatoon and Surrounding Area Meeting and Not Meeting Performance Measures and Targets between January 1, 2023, to March 31, 2023



Source: Information provided by the Saskatchewan Health Authority.

^A Four of the six performance measures remained unchanged from our 2017 audit.



The full Provincial Auditor's 2023 Report – Volume 2 available online at auditor.sk.ca includes annual integrated audits of 179 different agencies with year-ends between January and June 2023, four performance audits and 15 follow-up audits.

Some issues highlighted in this Report include concerns at 10 agencies (e.g., Western Development Museum, Prairie Agricultural Machinery Institute, Government Relations' Northern Municipal Trust Account, Ministry of Highways) as well as:

Performance Audits:

- Agriculture—Conserving Agricultural Crown Land
- Health—Coordinating the Provision of Timely Neurosurgery Services

Follow-up Audits:

- Education—Evaluating the Early Learning Intensive Support Program
- Environment—Regulating Waste Diversion through Recycling
- Saskatchewan Cancer Agency—Delivering the Screening Program for Colorectal Cancer
- Saskatchewan Health Authority—Minimizing Employee Absenteeism in Kindersley and Surrounding Areas
- Social Services—Investigating Allegations of Child Abuse and Neglect

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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