

Reporting on infrastructure—follow-up

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Main points

This chapter describes the status of our 2002 and 2003 recommendations about the adequacy of the information that three government agencies made public about key infrastructure they manage. These agencies are Saskatchewan Transportation Company (STC), Department of Highways and Transportation (Highways), and Department of Property Management (SPM).

STC has fully addressed our recommendation for improved public information. While Highways and SPM have improved the quality of information they publish, further improvements are needed, particularly the public disclosure of targets. We recognize that most of these improvements will occur in conjunction with improvements in performance reporting expected under the Government's Accountability Framework.

Introduction

The public relies on infrastructure to provide a wide range of public services; the Government relies on infrastructure to operate. Since 2002, our Office has encouraged the Government to improve its management of infrastructure and improve the information it publishes about it.

This chapter provides an update on the progress made on our previous recommendations by three agencies (Department of Highways and Transportation (Highways), Saskatchewan Transportation Company (STC), and Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation).¹ In May 2004, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts agreed with our recommendations.

To determine the status of the recommendations at October 31, 2005, we did the following:

- ◆ asked each agency to identify actions taken since our 2004 Report – Volume 3
- ◆ reviewed key information (e.g., annual reports, performance plans) each agency provided to the public
- ◆ assessed status of implementation for each recommendation

The following sections highlight, by agency, the recommendation related to the agency, actions taken, and the status of the recommendation.

Saskatchewan Transportation Company

STC has met the following recommendations that we made in our 2003 Report – Volume 3. We recommended that STC provide the public with additional information about:

- ◆ the current condition of its facilities to help explain their capacity

¹ The Government disestablished Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation and created the Department of Property Management effective April 1, 2005.

- ◆ strategies used to manage major risks facing its facilities by describing the actions it is taking to reduce these risks to an acceptable level

Chapter 18 of our 2004 Report – Volume 3 noted while STC provided information on the condition of its Regina facilities and related risks, it did not for its other facilities. STC uses its annual reports, quarterly corporate reports, web site, and news releases to provide the public with this additional information.

STC's 2004 Annual Report includes additional information about the condition of all its facilities. Also, STC discloses the age of each of its facilities and the key processes it uses to maintain those facilities (e.g., all facilities receive regular insurance inspections).

STC continues to disclose its risks and strategies to mitigate those risks relating to the Regina facilities (e.g., accessibility and structural). For example, in July 2005, it announced the building of a new bus depot and head office in Regina (i.e., strategy to mitigate risk).

STC provides the public with good information about its fleet of buses and facilities.

Department of Highways and Transportation

Highways has not yet fully implemented the recommendation we made in our 2002 Fall Report – Volume 2. We recommended that Highways give the public additional information on its key plans related to highway condition, safety, and reliability, as well as comparisons of plans to actual results with any differences explained.

Chapter 18 of our 2004 Report – Volume 3 reported that Highways provided its key plans for highway condition, safety, and reliability along with its basis for measuring its results, but not comparisons of planned to actual results.

In its 2004-05 Annual Report, Highways compares the status of all but three of its measures to the status in prior years. It explained why some measures were not updated for the 2004-05 fiscal year.

Consistent with the Department of Finance's *Content Requirements for 2005-06 Performance Plans*, Highways' 2005-06 Performance Plan does not include targets.² Inclusion of targets will help Highways to describe the extent to which it has achieved its intended result for each measure. Highways will publish targets and report its performance against these targets in future annual reports, as guided by the Department of Finance.

We continue to recommend that Highways give the public additional information on comparisons of plans related to its highways to actual results and explanations of any differences.

Department of Property Management

The Department of Property Management (SPM), formerly Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation, has not fully implemented the recommendations we made in our 2003 Report – Volume 3. We recommended that SPM provide the public with additional information about:

- ◆ the capacity of its facilities and vehicles including their current condition and potential volume of service
- ◆ the extent to which the use of key infrastructure (i.e., facilities, vehicles, and aircraft) achieved its operational and financial plans, and significant differences between actual and planned results

Chapter 18 of our 2004 Report – Volume 3 noted SPM published adequate information about the capacity of its vehicles and aircraft (i.e., the volume of services SPM can provide). But SPM needed to report information about the condition of its facilities, as well as comparisons of planned and actual operational results from the use of its infrastructure.

Similar to STC, SPM uses its annual reports, performance plan, and web site to provide additional information about key infrastructure. Its 2005-06 Performance Plan discloses the key operational performance measures, including two new measures, it intends to use to measure the results from facilities. Also, the 2005-06 Performance Plan includes the performance measure "Average condition of Government buildings (Facility Condition

² Targets are quantifiable estimates of results expected over a specific period.

Index)”. The “Facility Condition Index” (FCI) is an industry standard which provides the public with useful information about the capacity of its facilities.

As with Highways, SPM has not published the performance targets it will use for its measures, as guided by the Department of Finance under the Government’s Accountability Framework. As a result, SPM has not provided a comparison of its planned and actual results for these measures. SPM expects to provide its targets and report against them in future reports.

We continue to recommend that SPM provide the public with additional information about the extent to which the use of key infrastructure (i.e., facilities, vehicles, and aircraft) achieved its operational and financial plans, and significant differences between actual and planned results.

Next steps

Both Highways and SPM handle significant public infrastructure. It is important they keep legislators and public informed about this infrastructure. We will continue to monitor Highways’ and SPM’s progress towards implementing our recommendations.