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Main points

We audited whether the Department of Labour safeguarded public resources and complied with the law. It did so.

We also followed up our earlier audit of the Department's processes for assisting clients of its worker's advocate program. The Department has improved its processes. It has set clear performance expectations for the program. Also, the Department monitors the program's achievement of these expectations.

Introduction

The Department of Labour (Department) works with employees and employers to promote health and safety, co-operation, fairness, and equity in Saskatchewan workplaces. In co-operation with working people, unions, employers, and others, the Department is responsible to:

- ◆ develop, promote, and enforce the legislative framework for labour relations, labour standards, and occupational health and safety
- ◆ provide prevention, education, and training services for Saskatchewan workplaces
- ◆ help prevent and resolve workplace disputes
- ◆ develop policies and programs that lead to safe, fair, and productive workplaces

The following is a list of major programs and spending reported in the Department's 2005-06 Annual Report (see www.labour.gov.sk.ca).

	Original Estimates	Actual
	(in millions of dollars)	
Occupational Health and Safety	\$ 6.0	\$ 6.0
Labour Support Services	1.8	1.7
Labour Standards	2.0	2.1
Central Management and Services	4.6	4.6
Other	0.4	0.4
	<u>\$ 14.8</u>	<u>\$ 14.8</u>

Our audit conclusions and findings

The following are our audit conclusions for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006.

In our opinion:

- ◆ **the Department had adequate rules and procedures to safeguard public resources**
- ◆ **the Department complied with authorities governing its activities relating to financial reporting, safeguarding public resources, revenue raising, spending, borrowing, and investing**

The remainder of this chapter describes the Department's progress up to September 2006 to provide timely help to workers to claim compensation for workplace injuries.

Worker's advocates assist injured workers—a follow-up

Background

One of the mandates of the Department is to assist injured workers who seek help to claim compensation from the Workers' Compensation Board (WCB). The Department carries out this mandate through the worker's advocate program.

In 2003, we audited the Department's processes to assist workers (or their dependants) who seek help with their claims for compensation from the WCB. In Chapter 8 of our 2003 Report – Volume 3, we reported our audit results. We concluded the Department had adequate processes to assist workers with their claims except for two areas where we made recommendations.

In 2004, we followed up our recommendations. We reported the results in our 2004 Report – Volume 3, page 260. Our follow-up found the Department had improved its ability to fulfill its mandate. The Department had dramatically reduced the length of time that injured workers had to wait for assistance.

In 2006, we again reviewed the Department's actions on our recommendations. The results of this review are set out below. The recommendations and our prior work are in italics. The Department has implemented our recommendations.

Improved processes assist workers with claims

In 2003, we recommended the Department should improve its processes to assist workers with their claims for compensation. We recommended the improvements include setting clear performance expectations and aligning resources to meet them. In 2004, we found that the Department had not yet set performance expectations.

The Department has improved its processes by setting clear performance expectations. The Department's 2006-07 Performance Plan and the 2005-06 Annual Report now refer to the worker's advocate program. The Performance Plan and the Annual Report describe how the Department measures the program's performance. The Department's performance measures include the length of time injured workers wait for the services of an advocate and the number of files waiting for the services of an advocate. The Department has performance targets for these measures that it uses internally. The Department aligns its resources and adjusts its services in light of its performance expectations.

In 2003, we recommended the Department should improve its processes to monitor the achievement of its performance expectations for worker's advocate services. We recommended the improvements include the regular review of written analysis of performance, for example by senior managers. In 2004, we found the Department had not yet improved its processes.

In 2006, the Department has improved its processes. As noted, the Department has set clear performance expectations for the worker's advocate program. It monitors whether it is achieving those performance expectations using a computerized tracking system. The Department also uses other tools and reports to evaluate the program's performance. Monitoring its performance assists the Department in aligning resources for the program and in making adjustments to the services it provides.

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