



FOR RELEASE AFTER THE REPORT HAS BEEN TABLED

Backgrounder for News Release

Ministry of Health – Regulating Meat Safety

Saskatchewan is the only province in Canada where the responsibility for meat safety is split between two Ministries – the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Agriculture. Of the 90 slaughter plants in the province, Health is responsible for overseeing the annual inspection of 76 plants while 11 plants are the responsibility of Agriculture. The remaining three plants are operated under federal regulations and are inspected by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. Overall, there were no significant issues found with Agriculture’s program, under which **both** the plant and the meat are inspected. However, there were problems identified with Health’s program, under which only the cleanliness and cooling capacity of the **plant** is assessed, **not** the meat itself (i.e., the animal, the slaughter process, and the carcass). Provincial Auditor Bonnie Lysyk notes that Health offers very little guidance to plant operators on sanitation standards. She reports that when plants are identified as high-risk for producing unsafe meat, Health needs to do a better job of following up and confirming that problems have been fixed. Lysyk also points out that Saskatchewan is one of only three provinces (Saskatchewan, Newfoundland/Labrador, and New Brunswick) that permit the sale of meat commercially without inspecting it first, and recommends that Health reassess its regulations for meat safety.

Ministry of Education - Transporting Children Safely to School

The Ministry of Education is responsible for overseeing safe school transportation for Saskatchewan students. Provincial Auditor Bonnie Lysyk reports three areas where changes would improve student safety. First, the Ministry needs to guide school divisions on aligning their transportation practices with legislation. Second, the Ministry needs to establish consistency across school divisions in how they handle transportation risks such as driver training and performance, the use of 15-passenger vans, transporting particularly young children, and determining reasonable busing distances. Third, school divisions need to require external contractors that transport students to clearly demonstrate how they comply with laws and communicate their strategies for ensuring student safety. “The Ministry needs to establish a requirement for school divisions to report to their School Board and the Ministry on their strategies for reducing safety risks,” says Lysyk. “Only then can School Boards and the Ministry effectively monitor the overall safety of school transportation.”

Ministry of Health - Regulating Personal Care Homes

Personal care homes are privately-owned facilities where individuals who need assistance can reside and receive the care they require. The Ministry of Health is responsible for licensing and inspecting personal care homes in Saskatchewan. To improve its processes, the Ministry needs to perform more frequent and unannounced inspections of high-risk homes. “Some personal care homes repeatedly do not fix problems on a timely basis,” says Provincial Auditor, Bonnie Lysyk. “When problems are identified through inspections, the Ministry needs to follow up sufficiently to ensure these problems are addressed.” In some cases, problems identified through inspections continued for more than two years. The Ministry should establish a tracking system to allow it to monitor inspection dates, non-compliance, required actions, and the dates problems are fixed. Finally, the Ministry should publicly report when homes do not comply with required standards and regulations. This would provide the public with information to make informed decisions about personal care homes.



Five Hills Regional Health Authority - Nutrition in Long-Term Care Facilities

Nutrition in long-term care facilities has a significant impact on health care costs and the quality of life for residents. Proper nutrition helps people retain their health, and prevent and manage chronic conditions. Five Hills Regional Health Authority was selected to assess the nutrition it provides in long-term care facilities within its region. Five Hills owns and operates seven long-term care facilities, and three are owned and operated by affiliates. Provincial Auditor Bonnie Lysyk notes that Five Hills needs to improve its long-term care food services. “Five Hills needs to ensure its menus follow the Canada Food Guide,” says Lysyk. “It needs to have its meal plans reviewed by registered dietitians to ensure that residents are provided with adequate nutrition and food that meets their dietary needs.” In addition, Five Hills needs to ensure that meals are consistently served at the appropriate texture and temperature. It should also update its regional dietary policy manual, provide timely meal-time assistance to residents, monitor affiliate food costs, develop procedures for documenting and addressing complaints, and regularly survey residents and their families for satisfaction with food services.

Ministry of the Economy – Oil and Gas Well Cleanup

Oil and gas exploration and development is a key source of revenue for the province. However, it does pose environmental and financial risks to the people of Saskatchewan. The Ministry needs to use more up-to-date data and analysis to manage and report the financial and environmental risks related to the future cleanup of oil and gas wells and related facilities. It also needs to improve public reporting on the effectiveness of its programs in this area. Based on Ministry data, the number of new wells drilled in Saskatchewan increased by 10,000 or 15% over the last five years. However, over the same period, the number of non-producing or inactive wells increased at a faster rate, by 31% (7,000 wells). “The Ministry estimates there could be as many as 700 orphaned wells in Saskatchewan,” says Bonnie Lysyk, Provincial Auditor. “But only 10 have been cleaned up in the last 20 years and the number of inactive wells in the province continues to grow.” The Ministry needs to assess what steps are required to encourage timely cleanup of wells and facilities by their owners. It also needs to update its estimate of costs to clean up orphaned wells and facilities. An orphaned well is a well where the owner cannot be located or is unable to pay for cleanup costs. Finally, because the Ministry is responsible for both promoting the development of the oil and gas industry, and protecting the environment and the public from the impact of this development, it needs to actively mitigate the risks that result from its dual, potentially conflicting, roles.

E-Health – Electronic Health Record for Saskatchewan

eHealth Saskatchewan is responsible for the planning and implementation of a provincial electronic health record (EHR) – a project that was first introduced in 1997. In 2009, the Ministry of Health planned to have the EHR system available for use by 2014 at a cost of \$600 million. However, as of March 31, 2012, eHealth had spent \$415 million on the project, which it estimated was only about 30% complete. eHealth needs to establish a plan that specifies an estimated total cost to complete the project, as well as a timeline for when it will be ready for use. “This project has been ongoing for almost 15 years,” says Provincial Auditor Bonnie Lysyk. “Public money continues to be used for this initiative and without a proper plan in place, it’s difficult to measure progress against what has been spent to date.”

Ministry of Justice – Offender Information and Release Dates

The Ministry of Justice tracks offenders in provincial correctional facilities and within the community using a Corrections Management Information System (CMIS). Provincial Auditor Bonnie Lysyk reports that Ministry of Justice needs to improve its processes for ensuring the accuracy of offender data



contained in its CMIS system. “The accuracy and completeness of CMIS data is important,” says Lysyk. “Incorrect information could result in offenders being released from correctional facilities at the wrong time.” The Ministry of Justice also needs to establish better security requirements to protect offender data to ensure that confidential information isn’t accessed or inappropriately modified.

For more Information:

The full **Provincial Auditor’s 2012 Report - Volume 2** is available online at www.auditor.sk.ca.

Contact:

Ms Bonnie Lysyk, MBA, CA
Provincial Auditor Saskatchewan
1500-1920 Broad Street
Regina, Saskatchewan S4P 3V2
Telephone: (306) 787-6398
Fax: (306) 787-6383
Email: info@auditor.sk.ca