

Chapter 21

Government Relations – Co-ordinating Emergency Preparedness

1.0 MAIN POINTS

By January 2018, the Ministry of Government Relations had made some progress in improving its processes to co-ordinate emergency preparedness for provincial emergencies. It had implemented one of four recommendations made in our *2015 Report - Volume 1*, Chapter 12, and was working on implementing the remaining three recommendations.

The Ministry documents deliberations and decisions of its Provincial Emergency Management Committee. It was working with stakeholders to update risk assessments and was developing a process to confirm that stakeholder plans align with the Provincial Emergency Management Plan. The Ministry still needs to give guidance to key stakeholders to help them determine which infrastructure is critical to the province overall.

Having effective processes to coordinate emergency preparedness will help the government respond to emergencies in the province in a timely, efficient, and coordinated manner. This can help reduce the human and financial impact of emergencies and support the recovery process.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Government Relations is responsible for the province-wide emergency plan, and for co-ordinating emergency preparedness for provincial emergencies.¹

This chapter describes our follow-up of management's actions on the recommendations we made in 2015 about the Ministry's processes to co-ordinate emergency preparedness for provincial emergencies. Our *2015 Report - Volume 1*, Chapter 12 concluded that for the 12-month period ended December 31, 2014, the Ministry had, other than for certain areas, effective processes to co-ordinate emergency preparedness for emergencies in the province. We made four recommendations.

To conduct this follow-up audit, we followed the standards for assurance engagements published in the *CPA Canada Handbook - Assurance* (including CSAE 3001). To evaluate the Ministry of Government Relations' progress towards meeting our recommendations, we used the relevant criteria from the original audit. The Ministry agreed with the criteria in the original audit.

To carry out our follow-up audit, we discussed actions taken with management and reviewed key documents provided by management (e.g., meeting minutes, reports).

¹ Emergencies in the province can include those that are widespread (i.e., affect multiple communities), cause significant disruption or delay in services, have a definite and potential widespread threat to life, or cause significant damage to infrastructure. Examples include floods, forest fires, health epidemics, infrastructure failure, or transportation incidents. These emergencies may require support from the province (i.e. one or more of its agencies).



3.0 STATUS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

This section sets out each recommendation including the date on which the Standing Committee on Public Accounts agreed to the recommendation, the status of the recommendation at January 15, 2018, and the Ministry's actions up to that date. We found that the Ministry implemented one recommendation and has further work to do on the remaining three.

3.1 Deliberations and Decisions Documented

We recommended that the Ministry of Government Relations require the Provincial Emergency Management Committee to keep minutes documenting its deliberations and supporting its decisions. (2015 Report – Volume 1; Public Accounts Committee agreement September 15, 2016)

Status – Implemented

The Provincial Emergency Management Committee (consisting of representatives from 15 provincial agencies) used a template to record deliberations and decisions made at each of its annual meetings in 2016 and 2017. When the Committee minutes indicated that a follow up action was required, we found that the Ministry fulfilled its responsibility for co-ordinating these actions.

3.2 Annual Update to Risk Information Needed

We recommended that the Ministry of Government Relations follow its established process to work with key stakeholders on identifying and updating, each year, assessments of risks of emergencies requiring provincial assistance. (2015 Report – Volume 1; Public Accounts Committee agreement September 15, 2016)

Status – Partially Implemented

Since the 2015 audit, the Ministry continued to meet with various stakeholder groups (e.g., Provincial Government agencies, Federal Government, municipalities) annually to review upcoming seasonal risks. In addition, it has communicated with stakeholders about risks requiring provincial assistance.

In January 2018, the Ministry completed a provincial risk assessment of floods and natural hazards. It plans to complete a similar provincial assessment of human-induced and technological disaster risks. It last updated its province-wide risk assessment in 2012.

However, the Ministry has not developed a process to compile and evaluate all significant province-wide risks annually and consider whether changes are needed to the Provincial Emergency Management Plan. For example, the Ministry did not request comprehensive, updated risk information from stakeholders each year, and compile responses. Alternatively, the Ministry did not give its existing province-wide risk assessment to stakeholders and request confirmation of its accuracy.

Without a current province-wide risk assessment, the Ministry may not be aware of all emerging risks or significant changes in risk exposure and as such, may not be prepared to address these risks.

3.3 Guidance for Identifying Critical Infrastructure Needed

We recommended that the Ministry of Government Relations provide key stakeholders responsible for key infrastructure in Saskatchewan with guidance to help them determine which infrastructure is critical to emergency preparedness for the province overall. (2015 Report – Volume 1;

Public Accounts Committee agreement September 15, 2016)

Status – Not Implemented

The Ministry did not give guidance to key stakeholders (e.g., SaskPower, Water Security Agency, Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure) to help them determine which components of their infrastructure are critical for overall provincial emergency preparedness. Similar to our 2015 audit findings, the Ministry:

- Participates on forums that share information about critical infrastructure with responsible agencies
- Has defined the province's critical sectors (e.g., food, water, transportation, health care, etc.)
- Supports key stakeholders to voluntarily determine, for their own organizations, critical infrastructure using a process administered by Public Safety Canada

Lack of guidance may lead to inconsistent decisions about which infrastructure is critical to the province as a whole, and could lead to ineffective use of resources during a provincial emergency.

3.4 Alignment of Stakeholder Plans with Provincial Plan Needs to be Confirmed

We recommended that the Ministry of Government Relations periodically and formally confirm that emergency management plans of all key stakeholders align with the Provincial Emergency Management Plan. (2015 Report – Volume 1; Public Accounts Committee agreement September 15, 2016)

Status – Partially Implemented

The Ministry does not have a formal process to confirm that key ministries, Crowns, and agencies have prepared emergency plans and that those plans align with the Provincial Emergency Management Plan.

As of January 2018, the Ministry was working on a significant update to its Provincial Emergency Management Plan. To date, management has prepared a project charter and drafted the table of contents for the updated Plan. Management indicated that the



updated Plan is to include a documented process for confirming that the individual emergency preparedness plans of key stakeholders align with the overall provincial Plan. It plans to have this update completed by December 2018.

Without periodically confirming that stakeholder plans align with the provincial Plan, the Ministry cannot know whether key stakeholders are prepared to deliver on the roles they have been assigned during an emergency.