



Provincial Auditor's 2021 Report–Volume 2: Inadequate enforcement of tobacco and vaping legislative requirements will not prevent uptake by youth

The Ministry of Health needs to improve its monitoring of the Saskatchewan Health Authority's enforcement of the legislative requirements over the sale, promotion, and use of tobacco and vapour products

REGINA, December 8, 2021: In her *2021 Report – Volume 2*, Chapter 15, Provincial Auditor, Tara Clemett, examined the Ministry of Health's processes to monitor the Saskatchewan Health Authority's enforcement of provincial legislative requirements over the sale, promotion, and use of tobacco and vapour products, and found the Ministry needs to improve its monitoring of the Authority's inconsistent enforcement. She made eight recommendations.

"Effective enforcement restricts access to tobacco and vapour products by youth protecting them from the harms associated with using such products, while providing adult users with reasonable access," said Tara Clemett.

The audit found 19% of more than 1,200 retail locations in the province did not receive an annual inspection by Authority tobacco enforcement officers in 2020–21, nor has the Ministry determined clear rationale and guidance for routine inspection frequency. Not performing routine inspections frequently (e.g., annually) increases the risk that retailers do not comply with the law.

Moreover, the Ministry insufficiently monitors whether youth test shopper inspections are conducted annually, warning letters and notices of violations are delivered promptly to non-compliant retailers, and officers conduct timely reinspection of non-compliant retail locations. Not performing youth test shopper inspections as expected increases the risk that retailers sell to minors for extended periods of time.

The Ministry also needs to:

- Maintain a complete list of retail locations selling tobacco and vapour products
- Provide detailed guidance, including timelines, to tobacco enforcement officers on how to handle complaints

While nationally and provincially smoking rates are modestly decreasing, vaping rates are steadily increasing. Since Health Canada's 2016–17 Canadian Student Tobacco, Alcohol, and Drug Survey, vaping prevalence among students doubled in Canada and tripled in Saskatchewan. The latest 2018–19 survey shows 33% of Grades 7–9 students and 61% of Grades 10–12 students in Saskatchewan tried vaping (with or without nicotine).

The full Provincial Auditor's *2021 Report – Volume 2* available online at auditor.sk.ca.

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Additional issues highlighted in the Provincial Auditor's *2021 Report – Volume 2* include:

- Chapter 16: Conducting Timely and Accurate Coroner Investigations
- Chapter 17: Preventing Cyberattacks
- Chapter 18: Monitoring Quality of Care in Homes Supporting Adults with Intellectual Disabilities
- Chapters 21 and 22: Follow-up Audits on Increasing Graduation Rates and Instruction Time

Accompanying news releases and backgrounder give further details regarding these key topics.

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