

Chapter 23

Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency—Coordinating Provincial Emergency Preparedness

1.0 MAIN POINTS

By August 2022, the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency improved its processes to coordinate provincial emergency preparedness. It took sufficient steps to implement the last remaining recommendation we originally made in our 2015 audit.

The Agency finalized an update to its *Saskatchewan Provincial Emergency Management Plan*, and Cabinet endorsed this updated Plan in May 2022. As part of this update, emergency plans from key stakeholders must now align with the Provincial Emergency Management Plan.¹ The Agency continues to utilize various training opportunities, templates, and tabletop exercises to educate key stakeholders on what it expects in individual stakeholder emergency plans.

The Agency also developed a review process for each key stakeholder's emergency plan to assess each plan's alignment with the Provincial Emergency Management Plan. The Agency expects to complete these reviews by August 2023.

Aligning key stakeholder plans with the Provincial Emergency Management Plan helps the Government respond to emergencies 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 Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency is responsible for province-wide emergency plans and coordinating preparedness for provincial emergencies.² In accordance with legislation, the Agency maintains the Provincial Emergency Management Plan intended to direct cross-government emergency planning, response, and recovery.³ The Ministry of Government Relations was responsible for these matters until June 2019.⁴

This chapter describes our third follow-up audit of management's actions on the last remaining recommendation we initially made in 2015 about processes to coordinate emergency preparedness for provincial emergencies.⁵ Our *2020 Report – Volume 2*,

¹ Key stakeholders include nine government agencies: the Ministries of Environment, Government Relations, Health, Highways, and Social Services along with SaskEnergy, SaskPower, SaskTel, and the Water Security Agency.

² 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 provincial Government (i.e., one or more of its agencies).

³ *The Emergency Planning Act*, s.5(a).

⁴ On June 24, 2019, the responsibilities of *The Emergency Planning Act* transferred from the Ministry of Government Relations to the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency. (Order in Council 270/2019).

⁵ *2015 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 12*, pp. 115–136. At the time of the audit, the Ministry of Government Relations was responsible for processes to coordinate emergency preparedness for provincial emergencies. We made four recommendations.



Chapter 40, concluded that two of the three outstanding recommendations were implemented, and that the third was partially implemented.⁶

To conduct this audit engagement, we followed the standards for assurance engagements published in the *CPA Canada Handbook—Assurance* (CSAE 3001). To evaluate the Agency's progress toward meeting our recommendations, we used the relevant criteria from the original audit. The Ministry of Government Relations 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., plans, training materials, meeting minutes, reports).

3.0 STATUS OF RECOMMENDATION

This section sets out the recommendation including the date on which the Standing Committee on Public Accounts agreed to the recommendation, the status of the recommendation at August 31, 2022, and the Agency's actions up to that date.

3.1 Process to Align Stakeholder Emergency Plans with Provincial Plan Established

We recommended the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency (formerly responsibility of Ministry of Government Relations) periodically and formally confirm that emergency plans of all key stakeholders align with the Provincial Emergency Management Plan. (2015 Report – Volume 1, p. 132, Recommendation 4; Public Accounts Committee agreement September 15, 2016)

Status—Intent of Recommendation Met

Since our 2020 follow-up audit, the Agency finalized an update to, and received Cabinet endorsement of, the Provincial Emergency Management Plan requiring all individual key stakeholder plans to align with the Provincial Emergency Management Plan. The Agency also established a review process to assess alignment of each key stakeholder's plan with the Provincial Emergency Management Plan.

The recently updated Provincial Emergency Management Plan includes a new requirement that the emergency plans of each key stakeholder:

- Align with the Provincial Emergency Management Plan to help ensure consistency in the Government's overall approach to emergency management and response
- Outline the manner and means by which the stakeholder will minimize the impact of an emergency or disaster on provision of its essential services

We found the Agency made the Provincial Emergency Management Plan available to all key stakeholders. Since our last follow-up audit, the Agency continues to educate key

⁶ *2020 Report – Volume 2, Chapter 40*, pp. 289–292.

stakeholders by using various training courses, templates, and tabletop exercises to discuss, document, and define what it expects in individual emergency plans.

The Agency is responsible for confirming that key stakeholders' plans align with *The Emergency Planning Act*. We found the Agency established a sufficient review process in which the Agency will assess the content of each individual stakeholder plan and provide feedback as necessary to ensure alignment with the Provincial Emergency Management Plan.

While this review process has not yet occurred, the Agency documented its review process and expects to utilize the Emergency Operations Advisory Committee along with ongoing tabletop exercises to continue educating key stakeholders on these new requirements.^{7,8} The Committee's next scheduled meeting is in November 2022. The Agency also anticipates conducting its first formal review of each stakeholder's emergency plan within the next year (i.e., by August 2023).

Periodic, formal confirmation that key stakeholder emergency plans align with the Provincial Emergency Management Plan provides confidence there will be an overall and consistent approach to emergency management. It also assists key stakeholders in delivering on expected roles in the event of a provincial emergency.

⁷ This Committee is a forum for discussion related to business continuity and emergency management issues and policies. The Committee's mandate includes monitoring and evaluating changes in emergency practices, standards and legislation along with assisting with the development and maintenance of the Provincial Emergency Management Plan.

⁸ This Committee is comprised of the Emergency Planning Officers, or their respective designates, from the various government ministries, crown corporations and other crown agencies, as well as a representative from the provincial police service and Public Safety Canada.

