

Chapter 14

Horizon School Division No. 205—Maintaining Facilities

1.0 MAIN POINTS

By February 2024, Horizon School Division No. 205 improved its processes to maintain its 39 schools and seven other facilities located across east-central Saskatchewan. The Division implemented the remaining four recommendations we originally made in our 2020 audit.

The Division:

- Had current boiler inspections, and updated fire protection and suppression system inspection certificates in its IT system. It addressed deficiencies found during inspections timely.

Prioritizing the correction of important maintenance deficiencies helps the Division avoid non-compliance with applicable codes and provides safe environments for all students, staff, and the public.

- Developed a strategy to better use its IT system to plan, track, and monitor maintenance of its facilities and significant components. Additionally, the Division developed and documented its definition of what is considered a significant component.

Tracking key information for significant components in the maintenance IT system enhances the Division's ability to properly plan, track, and monitor the maintenance of its facilities and their key components.

- Documented the completion of maintenance activities performed, including accurately reflecting the work outstanding in the Division's IT system. Additionally, the Division monitored the completion timeliness of requested and expected maintenance via weekly reports on outstanding service requests.

Using the Division's maintenance IT system to track information on maintenance activities assists the Division in prioritizing the correction of maintenance deficiencies and monitoring the completion of maintenance.

Maintenance is one key aspect of asset management. Conducting effective maintenance and repairs on facilities reduces the potential health and safety problems for users (administrators, staff, and students), improves quality of space, improves facility value, reduces repair costs, and increases the chance facilities meet their expected service life (e.g., not having to replace a building earlier than intended).



2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background

Under *The Education Act, 1995*, and related regulations, the Ministry of Education is responsible for providing leadership and direction to prekindergarten through Grade 12 education sector. This includes providing school divisions with leadership in all areas, which includes maintenance of facilities. The Act requires the Ministry to review and approve the school divisions' estimated expenditures and significant capital projects.¹ Each year, the Ministry gives divisions funding to operate, including facility maintenance funding.

The Ministry expects divisions to maintain facilities in satisfactory operating condition.²

The Act gives each school divisions' Board of Education the authority to administer and manage the educational affairs of its division and to exercise general supervision and control over the schools in the school division.

Under the Act, a school division is responsible for:

- Providing and maintaining school accommodation, equipment, and facilities necessary for the educational programs and instructional services approved by the school division for each of its schools
- Setting out procedures with respect to the maintenance of school accommodations for maintaining satisfactory standards of comfort, safety and sanitation for students and other users

Horizon School Division No. 205 is located in east-central Saskatchewan. The Division owns 39 of the 43 schools it operates.³ Almost 90% of the Division's schools are more than 50 years old and, on average, in poor condition.

In 2022–23, the Division spent \$4.5 million (2021–22: \$6.2 million) specifically on maintenance of its facilities (e.g., contracted maintenance, renovations, supplies).⁴

2.2 Focus of Follow-Up Audit

This chapter describes our second follow-up audit of management's actions on the recommendations we first made in 2020.

In 2020, we assessed Horizon School Division No. 205's processes to maintain its facilities. Our *2020 Report – Volume 1*, Chapter 8, concluded that for the 12-month period ended September 30, 2019, the Division had effective processes to maintain its facilities, except

¹ *The Education Act* requires the Ministry to approve capital projects of divisions costing more than \$1 million (i.e., major). Capital projects include renovations to buildings. Also, the Ministry may supply divisions with capital grants to help fund renovations. It may also provide divisions with grants to assist with preventative maintenance and repairs costing less than \$1 million (i.e., minor), and it may appoint a person to provide advice with respect to approval of plans for the maintenance of school buildings.

² *Ministry of Education Preventative Maintenance and Renewal Funding Program Policy Guidelines*, Revised September 1, 2017, publications.saskatchewan.ca/#/products/76294 (14 March 2024).

³ The Division supplies staff and support to five schools in its area it does not own—three Hutterite schools, a village-owned school, and a school on George Gordon First Nation.

⁴ Adapted from Horizon School Division No. 205 financial information.

for the areas in our five recommendations.⁵ By January 2022, the Division had implemented one of the five recommendations.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 Division's progress toward meeting our recommendations, we used the relevant criteria from the original audit. Division management agreed with the criteria in the original audit.

To perform this follow-up audit, we reviewed facility maintenance policies and procedures, interviewed facility maintenance management staff, and reviewed documentation in the maintenance IT system for significant components (e.g., fire alarm inspection certificates). We also analyzed and tested information documented in the maintenance IT system (e.g., time to complete service requests and preventative maintenance tasks).

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 February 29, 2024, and Horizon School Division No. 205's actions up to that date.

3.1 Fire Protection Deficiencies Identified and Addressed Timely

We recommended Horizon School Division No. 205 prioritize all identified maintenance deficiencies associated with fire protection and suppression systems and boilers to enable determination of the nature and timing of necessary maintenance. (2020 Report – Volume 1, p. 92, Recommendation 1; Public Accounts Committee agreement January 12, 2022)

Status—Implemented

Horizon School Division No. 205 had current boiler inspections, updated fire protection and suppression system inspection certificates in its IT system, and addressed deficiencies found during inspections timely.

All six boilers we tested had current inspection certificates.

The Division uses its maintenance IT system to track inspection results of its fire protection and suppression systems. The Division indicated it does not have the in-house capacity (i.e., personnel) to conduct fire protection and suppression system inspections.⁷ Therefore, the Division contracts with a third-party inspector to inspect these systems annually. After an inspection is done, the Division receives an inspection certificate, which staff then upload to its IT system.

We found the Division had updated inspection certificates for all seven of the fire protection and suppression systems we tested in its IT system.

⁵ 2020 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 8, pp. 83–102.

⁶ 2022 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 14, pp. 169–176.

⁷ The Division considers fire alarms and sprinklers to be part of its fire protection and suppression system.



During annual inspections, the contracted inspector identifies and documents deficiencies (e.g., fire extinguishers due for replacement, emergency lights failed 30-minute test) with the Division's fire and suppression systems on the inspection certificates. For example, emergency lights need to be kept in working order to guide people to safety quickly and effectively in a fire. The Division uses the third-party inspectors to resolve any identified deficiencies.⁸

For the seven fire protection and suppression systems we tested, we found four instances where the inspector identified deficiencies and addressed the deficiencies timely.

For the six boilers we tested, inspectors did not find any deficiencies.

Prioritizing as well as addressing identified maintenance deficiencies associated with fire protection and suppression systems helps provide safe environments for all students and staff.

3.2 Tracking All Significant Components Complete

We recommended Horizon School Division No. 205 develop a strategy to better use its maintenance IT system to plan, track, and monitor maintenance of its facilities and significant components. (2020 Report – Volume 1, p. 92, Recommendation 2; Public Accounts Committee agreement January 12, 2022)

Status—Implemented

Horizon School Division No. 205 developed a strategy to better use its IT system to plan, track, and monitor completed and uncompleted maintenance of its facilities and significant components. Additionally, the Division developed and documented its definition of what it considers a significant component. Using clear definitions assists staff in understanding which assets the Division considers significant components and require tracking.

In its policy, the Division appropriately defined significant components as:

- Fire alarms and fire suppression systems
- Playgrounds
- Heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems
- Roofs
- Technical Safety Authority of Saskatchewan Code Compliant items (e.g., boilers and pressure vessels, elevators)⁹

The Division uses unique asset barcodes to identify and track each significant component. Facilities management staff (e.g., electrician, plumber) attaches asset barcodes on all major building components such as heating systems, fire alarm panels, and HVAC units.

⁸ The Division employs an electrician who resolves any deficiencies identified during boiler inspections.

⁹ Adapted from Horizon School Division No. 205 records.

The Division indicated it completed attaching asset barcodes on all its significant components by October 2023.

The Division continues to update information on significant components in its maintenance IT system as it replaces and installs them. Division staff recorded asset condition and useful life in its IT system for all significant components.

The maintenance IT system uses condition and expected replacement year information for significant components to calculate the facility condition index and amount of deferred maintenance.¹⁰ We found all 30 significant components we tested had information appropriately recorded in the maintenance IT system related to the asset's condition and its life expectancy.

Tracking key information for all significant components in the maintenance IT system enhances the Division's ability to plan and monitor the maintenance of its facilities and significant components. It also enables the Division to use the system to monitor changes in the facility condition index and in deferred maintenance to help determine whether it is doing the right maintenance at the right time.

3.3 Maintenance IT System Contains Up-to-Date Information

We recommended staff of Horizon School Division No. 205 maintain up-to-date and accurate information in its maintenance IT system about completion of assigned maintenance activities. (2020 Report – Volume 1, p. 97, Recommendation 3; Public Accounts Committee agreement January 12, 2022)

Status—Implemented

Horizon School Division No. 205 staff use the Division's maintenance IT system to document the completion of maintenance activities performed, including accurately reflecting the work outstanding to resolve a maintenance activity.

The Division expects staff to complete assigned maintenance (service request/preventative maintenance) within stated timeframes (see **Figure 1**) and document the completion of maintenance in the appropriate module of the maintenance IT system.¹¹

Figure 1—Priority Ratings of Service Requests and Timeframes for Resolution

Priority Rating	Time to Address	Definition
Urgent	2 working days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life safety and building security • Natural gas leaks • No power for more than two hours • No running water/boil water advisory • Furnaces/boilers malfunctioning (no heat throughout school) • Risk of school closure

¹⁰ Facility condition index is a performance indicator used to evaluate the current condition of a building. It is measured on a scale of 0% to 100%, with a higher percentage showing a building is in poorer condition.

¹¹ Preventative maintenance tasks are routine repairs and inspections intended to assist in systematic correction of emerging failures before they occur or before they develop into major defects. Service requests are requests for minor maintenance (reactive maintenance) initiated through the service request module in the maintenance IT system.



Priority Rating	Time to Address	Definition
High	5 working days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broken windows (all panes of glass broken) • Code issues (fire alarm panels) • Emergency exits not functioning • Water leaks that cannot be stopped (5 gallons in 24 hours) • Furnaces/boilers not functioning (no heat in one area of school) • Risk of school closure
Medium	15 working days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broken glass (one pane only) • More than 3 lights out in one room • Exterior door issues; doors do lock • Small water leak (less than 5 gallons in 24 hours) • Interior door issues for computer/science labs • Toilets in one area/washroom out of order
Low	As schedule permits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Light out (one only) • Interior door issues • One toilet out of order • Minor projects such as whiteboards, bulletin board, door closures

Source: Adapted from Horizon School Division No. 205 records.

We analyzed the 297 service requests closed between February 1, 2023, and February 20, 2024. We found the Division:

- Resolved all four urgent service requests within two working days.
- Addressed 52 of 53 high-priority service requests within five working days.

Management indicated the one unresolved request should have been downgraded to low-priority after staff addressed the initial maintenance issue.

- Resolved all 240 medium-priority service requests within 15 working days.

For 30 preventative maintenance tasks we tested, we found all tasks completed within the expected timeframes and were appropriately documented in the maintenance system.

Effectively maintaining and monitoring the completion status of maintenance activities helps ensure Division staff complete maintenance as expected, which further reduces deficiencies of the Division's facilities or significant components.

3.4 Timeliness of Maintenance Actively Monitored

We recommended Horizon School Division No. 205 actively monitor the timeliness of completion of requested and expected maintenance.

(2020 Report – Volume 1, p. 98, Recommendation 4; Public Accounts Committee agreement January 12, 2022)

Status—Implemented

Horizon School Division No. 205 monitors completion timeliness of requested and expected maintenance tracked in the Division's maintenance IT system.

The Division's facility maintenance staff and management receive updated reports of outstanding service requests along with associated priority ratings (see **Figure 1**). These reports are prepared for each facility maintenance staff weekly.

Additionally, another report provides detailed information on each service request, its priority rating, the facility the request relates to, a brief description of the service request, and who the request is assigned to. It is prepared and reviewed weekly by each staff member and the Manager of Facility Services. This provides management sufficient information to determine whether staff are completing service requests and preventative maintenance tasks assigned to them in a timely way.

Effectively monitoring the timeliness of completion of maintenance activities helps ensure that maintenance is completed as expected.

