



Provincial Auditor's 2024 Report – Volume 2

Chapter 13: Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency—Timely 911 call taking and dispatching critical for fire emergencies

Answering and dispatching 911 calls quickly is critical so people receive timely fire emergency response as lives and infrastructure are often at risk. The Provincial Emergency Communications Centre (PECC) in Prince Albert received just over 300,000 calls for 911 services in 2023–24. The Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency uses a service provider (CanOps) to operate PECC, paying it \$13.7 million in 2023–24.

- Agency paid CanOps \$13.7 million in 2023–24 (2022–23: \$9.6 million)
- In April 2024, 97% of 911 calls to PECC answered within 15 seconds
- 32 instances found where CanOps staff had expired training certifications

In line with industry standards, the Agency expects CanOps to answer 90% of all 911 calls within 15 seconds but requires timeliness targets for taking and dispatching 911 fire calls and needs to monitor whether those targets are met. While the Agency has not communicated a target, CanOps expects 911 call takers to dispatch fire calls to fire departments within 90 seconds. Our testing of 30 calls found 77% of fire emergency calls to PECC took more than 90 seconds to be taken and dispatched. Dispatching fire departments to a fire quickly makes for both a safer and more effective response and is something the Agency should monitor to identify and address deficiencies.

The current agreement between the Agency and CanOps has significant deficiencies related to IT security requirements. This increases the risk 911 IT systems go down thereby significantly impacting 911 operations, resulting in 911 call processing times escalating from seconds to minutes, which can mean the difference between life and death.

The audit also found the Agency has not fully rationalized the necessary number of staff needed to support the budgeted amount paid to CanOps. The administrative fee the Agency paid to CanOps increased from \$547,000 in 2021–22 to \$1.2 million in the 2024–25 budget request. Further, the Agency did not obtain and assess quarterly financial reports from CanOps during 2023–24, increasing the risk budget overages may occur and not be addressed timely.

Chapter 14: SaskPower—Clear action plans would demonstrate intent to act when low and non-emitting energy targets are not met

SaskPower projects energy demand will more than double from current levels by 2050. It is using its net-zero 2050 pathway formulated from its long-term supply planning processes to make electricity generation investment decisions. This pathway plans for about 57% of available generating capacity by 2050 will come from renewable non-emitting sources (e.g., wind, solar, hydro), with nuclear (12%) and natural gas with carbon capture (12%) also anticipated. In 2023–24, about 35% of SaskPower's total generating capacity came from renewable non-emitting energy sources with the remainder fueled mainly from coal and natural gas; SaskPower is targeting a minimum of 40–50% of its electricity generation coming from non-emitting sources by 2030.

We found overall SaskPower had generally effective planning processes to transition to low and non-emitting energy sources to meet its greenhouse gas emissions reduction and renewable energy generation targets. Under its net-zero 2050 pathway, SaskPower would not be compliant with the draft federal Clean Electricity Regulations by 2035, which may require SaskPower to adjust its pathway once these regulations are finalized.

In 2023–24, SaskPower planned to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 8% compared to 2005 levels but ended up with a 4% reduction. Outlining clear action plans to address missed incremental targets demonstrates SaskPower's intent to act so long-term targets like a 50% reduction in its greenhouse gas emissions from 2005 levels by 2030 are not missed, and cost impacts are minimized.

Chapter 20: Health—Recommendations still outstanding for effective critical incident reporting to improve patient safety

Investigating critical incidents in the health sector helps to improve patient safety. In 2023–24, healthcare organizations (e.g., Saskatchewan Health Authority, Saskatchewan Cancer Agency) reported 215 critical incidents (2022–23: 145 critical incidents) to the Ministry of Health. Identifying incidents that resulted, or could have resulted, in patient harm and recommending and implementing actions to improve systems makes healthcare safer.



We found the Ministry still needs to assess planned corrective actions and contributing factors in critical incident reports from healthcare organizations to help ensure the actions effectively address causes of critical incidents. We found 17 of the 20 reports we tested had weak planned corrective actions and some did not provide important details such as describing why an incident occurred to inform corrective actions. The Ministry must also take steps to advance timely implementation of corrective actions—94% of 340 incident recommendations provided by the Saskatchewan Health Authority were not implemented and were past planned implementation dates as of June 2023.

The Ministry also needs to monitor and enforce compliance with critical incident reporting deadlines set in legislation—missed deadlines worsened significantly from our original 2020 audit. We found the Ministry received 62% (2019–20: 44%) of initial critical incident notifications later than the three-day requirement and it received 90% (2019–20: 73%) of the critical incident reports later than the 60-day requirement. Delays in receiving notifications and reports from healthcare organizations increases the risk that factors contributing to a critical incident continue to exist and similar patient harm events reoccur.

The Ministry also needs to:

- Analyze critical incidents using its framework to identify and implement system-wide improvements
- Determine when to issue a patient safety alert and monitor the alert’s effectiveness (the Ministry has not issued any patient safety alerts since September 2019)

Chapter 8: Saskatchewan Health Authority—AIMS controls to be assessed in 2024–25

The Saskatchewan Health Authority’s Administrative Information System (AIMS) went live in June 2024. Our annual audit examined the Authority’s controls to safeguard public resources to March 31, 2024. Our Office will confirm the enhancement of controls due to AIMS during our 2024–25 audit of the Authority.

The implementation of AIMS should lead to increased IT system availability (e.g., less downtime and risk of breaches), productivity gains (e.g., less time on labour-intensive, paper-based processes), and standardized financial processes and reporting. AIMS should also automatically enforce segregation of incompatible duties related to key financial processes, which has been an outstanding audit recommendation from our Office since 2019. Properly segregating duties decreases the risk of undetected fraud and financial errors.

The Authority still needs to complete a formal lessons learned report once the AIMS project is complete. Documenting and sharing such information with other government agencies leading significant projects can help to avoid system implementation failures and cost overruns on similar IT projects in the future.

- Project improvements like increased user acceptance testing made since AIMS implementation failure in November 2022
- AIMS development started in 2018 with total anticipated project cost of about \$86 million with planned implementation by 2021
- Nearly \$190 million spent on AIMS by March 31, 2024, and total forecasted cost of about \$250 million to implement AIMS fully by 2026

Chapter 9: Social Services—Consideration of best value when procuring hotel rooms for clients

As part of our annual financial audit of the Ministry of Social Services, we examined the design and implementation of the Ministry’s processes up to July 31, 2024, for procuring hotel rooms when income assistance or child and family programs’ clients require hotel stays. Prior to March 2024, the Ministry’s processes did not specifically consider best value when procuring appropriate hotel rooms for its clients—increasing the risk of the Ministry not spending public resources wisely. The Ministry spent over \$3.5 million on hotels for clients in 2023–24.

At the end of 2023–24, the Ministry initiated two hotel pilot projects (i.e., obtaining three quotes, using contracted hotels with fixed rates). We found the Ministry needs to centrally collect reliable data and conduct a robust evaluation to determine whether the hotel pilot projects improved its efficiency in procuring hotel rooms for clients. Ministry staff also need to document the chosen nightly hotel rate in the case management system to demonstrate consideration of best value when attaining hotel rooms for child and family program clients, as we found instances where Ministry staff may not have selected the hotel with the lowest night rate and did not document why not. The Ministry also needs to publicly disclose payments made on behalf of its clients to vendors like hotels to enhance transparency and accountability. Making this information readily available allows the public to better hold the Government and public sector officials accountable for the use of public funds.



The full Provincial Auditor's 2024 Report – Volume 2 available at auditor.sk.ca has annual integrated (financial) audits of 175 different agencies with fiscal year-ends between January and July 2024, including integrated audits of 17 ministries, 33 Crown corporations and agencies, seven pension and employee benefit plans, and 36 healthcare affiliates.

Ten agencies, out of 175 different agencies, highlighted in this Report had identified concerns with their financial-related controls, financial and governance-related legislative authorities, or in preparing reliable financial statements, including: Government Relations' Northern Municipal Trust Account (Chapter 3), Ministry of Highways (Chapter 5), Northlands College (Chapter 6), Prairie Agricultural Machinery Institute (Chapter 7), and Western Development Museum (Chapter 10).

The 2024 Report – Volume 2 also covers four non-financial performance audits and 17 follow-up audits such as:

Performance Audits:

- Farm Land Security Board—Regulating foreign ownership of Saskatchewan farmland (Chapter 11)
- Saskatchewan Housing Corporation—Planning for social housing units in Regina (Chapter 12)

Follow-up Audits:

- Corrections, Policing and Public Safety—Processes to administratively segregate inmates (Chapter 15)
- Procurement processes at Northern Lights School Division and Northlands College (Chapters 22 and 23)
- Several healthcare follow-ups covering processes to prevent diabetes-related health complications (Chapter 19) and to analyze surgical biopsies in Regina and Saskatoon (Chapter 26), as well as efficient use of MRIs in Regina (Chapter 27)
- Social Services—Monitoring quality of care in homes supporting adults with intellectual disabilities (Chapter 31)

The Provincial Auditor is an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan. The Office advances government's accountability, transparency, and management of public resources through independent assessment and reporting.

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