



Auditor General of Nova Scotia

1888 Brunswick Street, Suite 302
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3J8

902 424 4046 tel
902 424 4350 fax
www.oag-ns.ca
Michael.Pickup@novascotia.ca

AUDITOR GENERAL--Report Focuses on Wait Times, Tri-County School Board, Community Services Software

In his first report as auditor general of Nova Scotia, released today, Dec. 3, Michael Pickup said that the province does not have a plan in place to reach national wait times for elective surgery such as hip and knee replacement.

He also said that the Tri-County School Board needs to do a better job at overseeing its students' educational performance, and the case management software at the Department of Community Services has security vulnerabilities.

"The Department of Health and Wellness does not have realistic wait-time targets for elective surgeries," said Mr. Pickup. "In Nova Scotia, people awaiting knee or hip replacement wait up to three times longer than national benchmarks before their surgery.

"For example, in 2013, only 43 per cent of knee surgeries and 58 per cent of hip replacements met the six-month benchmark. These are the lowest rates in the country. All three remaining Atlantic provinces have better results."

The audit found that there is no provincial approach to managing wait times and reaching national targets. In addition, the department has not clearly outlined who is accountable to achieve these results.

"Nova Scotians awaiting surgeries need to know how the government plans to shorten their wait time and who will be held accountable for results," said the auditor general.

The report also found that the utilization of operating rooms is not monitored to ensure that they are used to their full capacity. In addition, operating time is often allocated based on historical precedent without consideration of wait list priorities.

The Department of Health and Wellness and the three selected Health authorities -- Annapolis Valley Health, Capital Health, and the IWK Health Centre -- all agreed with the recommendations.

In the report Mr. Pickup also said the Tri-County Regional School Board is not addressing students' poor achievement.

The 6,100 students in Digby, Yarmouth and Shelburne counties have some of the poorest results in the province in literacy and numeracy. The audit found that the board did not do its job of ensuring that school officials are held accountable to deliver acceptable student performance. In addition, officials reporting to the board do not effectively monitor the progress of students and no comprehensive strategy exists to address the poor performance.

"The Tri-County Regional School Board oversees the work of approximately 470 school teachers and 350 support staff for its 6,100 students. The board and management owe it to the students that they get the education necessary to keep up with others in the province."

Both the school board members and officials agreed with the recommendations.

Mr. Pickup said in the report there are security issues with the case management software used at Community Services.

The Integrated Case Management system is used to track, manage and make decisions on services to clients. The audit found that the servers are not fully secured against unauthorized access from within the government. In fact, auditors were able to gain unauthorized access to sensitive client information without being detected. This specific issue was resolved but other weaknesses continue to exist.

"One out of five Nova Scotians depend on Community Services for key support," said the auditor general. "These clients must be assured that their personal information is protected.

"The department should address the security weaknesses identified in our audit."

The department has agreed to act on the recommendations, accepting that changes are needed.

The 68-page report contains 31 recommendations. The full report is available at www.oag-nb.ca. You can also follow the Office of the Auditor General on Twitter @OAG_NS.

FOR BROADCAST USE:

In his first report as auditor general, Michael Pickup says the province does not have a plan to reach national wait times for elective surgeries.

The auditor general said that only 43 per cent of knee replacements and 65 per cent of hip replacements met the six-month national target in 2013. These are the lowest results in the country. The other Atlantic provinces all have better results.

The report also notes that the Tri-County Regional School Board is not addressing students' poor achievement. The board has some of the poorest results in the province in literacy and numeracy, yet it has no comprehensive strategy to address the poor performance.

The case management system at the Department of Community Services has security issues. The audit found its servers are not fully secured against access from within government. Although this issue was corrected, other weaknesses still exist.

The 68-page report contains 31 recommendations to government. In all instances, those named in the report agreed with the recommendations. The full report is available on the auditor general's website.

-30-

Media Contact: Michael Pickup
Auditor General
902-424-4108
E-mail: Michael.Pickup@novascotia.ca