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# Office of the Auditor General

## Nova Scotia

### AUDITOR GENERAL -- Spring 2016 Report Released

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The Department of Health and Wellness and the Nova Scotia Health Authority must deliver health care more efficiently and effectively, Auditor General Michael Pickup, said in his June 2016 Report to the House of Assembly released today, June 8.

"Historical ways of providing health care are not sustainable. The department and the health authority need to determine when and where health services will be provided and communicate this to Nova Scotians," said Mr. Pickup.

Health-care costs in Nova Scotia account for about 40 per cent of total government expense. The province's hospitals have significant infrastructure needs and there is not enough funding to complete all urgent repairs and maintenance. While there are significant infrastructure needs, some hospitals are located very close to each other.

The department and the health authority need to look at the location, use and operation of facilities throughout the province and determine how to best use limited financial resources to deliver health services as efficiently and effectively as possible, including considering whether some services would be better delivered outside of hospitals. This includes figuring out how and where to provide services now offered at the Victoria General site in Halifax and making this happen as quickly as possible.

The Department of Natural Resources needs to make the management of species at risk a higher priority. It is behind in developing and reviewing plans to help with conservation and recovery of these species. In some cases, plans are several years past due. There are currently 60 species at risk in Nova Scotia including, snapping turtles and the Atlantic whitefish.

Species recovery teams, comprised of department staff and external experts, develop recovery plans for species at risk. "We found Natural Resources needs to inform teams when actions will be taken or why particular recommendations will not be implemented," said Mr. Pickup. "Monitoring of species at risk to see if things are improving also needs work."

An audit of licensing and inspection of homes for special care, which house about 10,000 Nova Scotians, at the Departments of Community Services and Health and Wellness, found both departments completed their required inspections. Overall, Community Services is effectively managing the inspection process while Health and Wellness needs to make a number of improvements.

Community Services has well-defined inspection processes that help promote consistency among inspectors. It also has an information system which it uses to schedule inspections, record results and monitor trends over time.

Health and Wellness does not have an information system to track inspections. The department's monitoring and enforcement actions are not consistent or timely. It also lacks written enforcement guidance for inspectors when deficiencies are identified.

"While together these two departments spend \$770 million per year on homes for special care, neither department has evaluated long-term funding needs," said Mr. Pickup. "We did note that both have begun projects in this area."



The 63-page report contains 16 recommendations, all of which have been accepted by government.

The full report and related videos are available at [www.oag-ns.ca](http://www.oag-ns.ca).

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FOR BROADCAST USE:

In his spring report, Auditor General Michael Pickup says the Department of Health and Wellness and the Nova Scotia Health Authority need to determine when and where health services will be provided across the province and communicate this to Nova Scotians.

Hospital infrastructure across Nova Scotia is aging and requires significant repairs. Some facilities are close to other facilities and should be examined to see if this is the most efficient and effective way to deliver care.

The Department of Natural Resources needs to make the 60 species at risk a bigger priority. It is often late in developing and updating plans to recover species. Monitoring of species at risk also needs improvement to know whether progress has been made.

The Department of Community Services is doing a good job of monitoring its homes for special care while Health and Wellness needs to improve. The inspection process by Health and Wellness is not always timely and could be more consistent across inspectors.

Both departments need to complete work to determine long-term funding needs for homes for special care which cost about \$770 million per year for 10,000 Nova Scotians.

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