
1 Message from the Auditor General

Appointment as Auditor General

- 1.1 On April 29, 2014, I was appointed as Auditor General of Nova Scotia for a term of 10 years beginning July 2, 2014. The goal of my office is to provide independent and objective assurance concerning the operations of the Government, the use of public funds, and the integrity of financial and performance reports. To do this we issue independent opinions on Government financial reports and conduct performance audits on public sector operations to assess whether:
- governance frameworks provide appropriate direction, control and accountability;
 - value for money is achieved;
 - public funds and property are properly managed; and
 - legislation and government policies are complied with.
- 1.2 Our audits not only seek to identify significant issues, but also provide recommendations to improve the management of the public sector. We work closely with the Public Accounts Committee and senior Government officials as they strive to deliver services to Nova Scotians in the most efficient and economical manner possible.
- 1.3 I would like to thank my executive team and all staff within the Office for a smooth transition and working with me as we fulfill our mandate and strive to continue to do better into the future.

My Office

- 1.4 The work of my Office is led by an executive team.
- Alan Horgan, CA – Deputy Auditor General
 - Ann McDonald, CA – Assistant Auditor General
 - Evangeline Colman-Sadd, CA – Assistant Auditor General
 - Terry Spicer, CMA – Assistant Auditor General
 - Darleen Langille – Assistant to the Executive Leadership Team



- 1.5 Reporting to the executive are approximately 28 audit and administrative professionals who have varied academic backgrounds and professional designations. Our reports are available on our website at www.oag-ns.ca. You can also follow the Auditor General on Twitter – @OAG_NS.

- 1.6 Since taking Office on July 2, 2014 I have:
 - issued a clean audit opinion on the Public Accounts of Nova Scotia; and
 - tabled this first performance audit report.

This Performance Audit Report

- 1.7 This report has three performance audit chapters.
 - Community Services: Integrated Case Management System
 - Education and Early Childhood Development: Tri-County Regional School Board
 - Health and Wellness: Surgical Waitlist and Operating Room Utilization

- 1.8 The following paragraphs provide a brief overview of the highlights of these chapters.

- 1.9 *Community Services: Integrated Case Management System* – We found that the Department of Community Services does not have all the necessary controls in place to protect the privacy, integrity and availability of data in the Integrated Case Management system. Specifically, servers were not fully secured against unauthorized access from within Government. The audit also identified weaknesses that could impact the completeness, accuracy and timely access of the information used in delivering services to Nova Scotians.

- 1.10 *Education and Early Childhood Development: Tri-County Regional School Board* – Our audit concluded that the Tri-County Regional School Board and management are not providing adequate oversight and monitoring of the educational services delivered within their schools. The governing Board does not receive or request information to monitor the progress of students nor has it determined the reasons for poor student performance in numeracy and literacy.

- 1.11 *Health and Wellness: Surgical Waitlist and Operating Room Utilization* – Our work determined that the Province does not have adequate processes



to manage waitlists for surgery and the allocation of operating room time does not always consider patient priority and waitlists. Nova Scotia lags far behind national benchmarks in key areas. For example, in 2013, only 43 percent of knee replacements met the six-month benchmark. While there have been efforts within district health authorities and the IWK Health Centre to manage wait times, a systematic and common Provincial approach is still in the planning stages.

- 1.12 Overall, the common theme from these three audits is the need for effective leadership to ensure those responsible for education, healthcare and the delivery of services are achieving the desired results.

Going Forward

Implementing actions to address weaknesses from prior audit reports

- 1.13 Over the past number of years, my Office has reported on the low level of success by Government officials in implementing their promised action on the problems facing Government on a timely basis. We understand that governments face many challenges, changing priorities and fiscal constraints. However, failing to implement the promised action increases the risk that services are not effectively delivered in the most efficient and economical manner possible. Departments need to do a better job of implementing our recommendations and elected officials, such as the Public Accounts Committee, need to continue to hold departments accountable for results.

My expectations

- 1.14 Our audits are well thought out and involve the auditee from the planning to reporting phases. We will continue to work to ensure our recommendations are focused, reasonable, and have a commitment from auditees to address the issues in a timely manner. Therefore, I would like to see more timely implementation of promised change so that all Nova Scotians get the services they need. If promised change does not happen, the Nova Scotia Legislature and citizens need to know who did not deliver, why and what the consequences are. This is accountability at its core, which is fundamental to a public sector facing fiscal and other constraints.



Our work forward

1.15 Our planned audit reports are now outlined on our website up until June 2015 and include the following.

January 2015 Special Report

- Bluenose II Restoration Project

February 2015

- Results of Financial Audits and Reviews
- Crown Corporation Accountability
- Indicators of Financial Condition
- Review of Audit Opinions and Management Letters
- Follow-up of 2012 Financial Recommendations

April 2015

- Report on Review of Government Financial Statement Revenue Estimates for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 2016

June 2015

- Forest Management and Protection
- Aquaculture Monitoring
- Follow-up of 2011 and 2012 Performance Audit Recommendations
- Responsible Gambling and the Prevention and Treatment of Problem Gambling
- Procurement and Management of Professional Services