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Auditor General of Nova Scotia

AUDITOR GENERAL--February 2017 Report on Follow-up of 2013 and 2014 Recommendations

In his February 2017 Report, released today, Feb. 22, Auditor General Michael Pickup noted a significant improvement by the Government of Nova Scotia in getting recommendations from previous audits completed.

"This year's completion rate of 72 per cent is the government's best performance yet and I am very pleased to see change happening."

The auditor general followed up on the 321 recommendations and promises made from 22 audits and determined that 232 have been completed. These 22 audits were those reported in 2013 and 2014. This reflects a focused effort on results by leaders within government, and all members of the civil service along with scrutiny of the public accounts committee.

"I encourage government to continue making these changes a priority and to keep up the good results, which promote better government for Nova Scotians.

"It is also encouraging that nine organizations in government have completed all of their promised actions. The leaders from those organizations should be recognized for this achievement and for showing that change can happen."

While pleased with the overall results, the auditor general said he is troubled that a small number of organizations are doing poorly in completing their promised actions and therefore services to Nova Scotians may not be improved as quickly in some key areas.

"It is concerning that the Nova Scotia Health Authority has only completed two of the seven recommendations made in 2014 around operating room usage and surgical wait-time reporting.

"Nova Scotia has the longest wait times for knee and hip surgeries in Canada, but the health authority has yet to give Nova Scotians targets of how long they will have to wait in the future."

Mr. Pickup indicated that he recognizes challenges in combining nine health authorities into one and that there is work underway for a provincial approach.

"The health authority should tell Nova Scotians when it will complete the recommendations so they may understand when and how the worst performance in Canada will be improved."

The auditor general is also concerned with slow progress by the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal in making changes as a result of the audit of the department's mechanical branch.

The 2013 audit had 35 recommendations to improve controls which Mr. Pickup believes were relatively straightforward to implement but to date actual results are unsatisfactory.

"I am disappointed that nearly half of the actions have yet to be completed and believe this level of inaction on promised change is a weak performance."

The auditor general also cited concern with the lack of completion by the Tri-County Regional School Board of critical promises to improve its oversight of student achievement.

"Two years after our audit the Tri-County Regional School Board is yet to complete work to understand reasons for below average performance of students under their scrutiny.



"The board needs to complete this work as it focuses on improving results. The 2016 reported results continue to show below average achievement by Tri-County students."

A short video, one page report summary and full 57 page report are available at www.oag-nb.ca .

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In his February 2017 Report, Auditor General Michael Pickup says government's 72 per cent rate for completing 2013 and 2014 audit recommendations is the government's best performance ever.

He gives credit to government leaders and all civil servants for their efforts to improve how government operates for all Nova Scotians.

However, he says a small number of organizations are still failing to adequately address some significant recommendations aimed at improving operations of Government.

He says the Nova Scotia Health Authority in particular, needs to improve its efforts at publicly reporting targets related to some of the worst wait times for surgery in Canada.

A short video, one page report summary and the full report are available on the auditor general's website.

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