



5161 George Street
Royal Centre, Suite 400
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 1M7

Office of the Auditor General

Nova Scotia

AUDITOR GENERAL--April 2018 Report on Follow-up of 2014 and 2015 Recommendations

In his April 2018 Report on Follow-up of 2014 and 2015 Recommendations, released today, April 3, Auditor General Michael Pickup noted the government is doing a very good job addressing recommendations from previous audits by completing what they said they would do.

“This year’s overall completion rate of 75 per cent is the government’s highest rate ever and the government should be applauded. I am glad to see the continued annual improvement over the past four years, going from 53 per cent in 2014 to this year’s 75 per cent,” said Mr. Pickup.

The auditor general followed up on 213 recommendations, and government’s commitments made in response, from 20 audits reported in 2014 and 2015. The 160 completed recommendations show continued focused efforts by government leaders and the civil service, along with the scrutiny of those responsible for oversight.

“I am encouraged by the 12 organizations in government that completed 100 per cent of their promised actions, and the leaders of those organizations can be proud of this achievement.

“Organizations which have not yet completed all their promised actions should continue to work toward timely completion to help promote better government for all Nova Scotians.”

In his report, the auditor general noted that the Nova Scotia Health Authority has an overall completion rate of 44 per cent from two 2014 audits. Of concern is that the authority has not completed five of seven of its commitments to recommendations covering surgical wait time reporting and operating room usage.

Surgical wait times remain an issue for Nova Scotians and their families. Public data shows Nova Scotians needing hip and knee replacements generally wait a year and a half for surgery, excluding wait time for a referral appointment with a surgeon. The national benchmark for surgery wait times is six months - a standard accepted by the province.

“Nova Scotia Health Authority management told us it is working to improve surgical wait times and operating room use across the province, and have a detailed plan to reduce hip and knee replacement wait times to meet the national six-month wait time target by 2020,” said Mr. Pickup.

“We encourage the Nova Scotia Health Authority to complete its actions, and publicly report on how and when surgery wait times will improve, including the significant wait time target reductions needed to make their 2020 goal.”

A short video, two-page summary and full 37-page report are available at www.oag-ns.ca

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In his April 2018 Report on Follow-up of 2014 and 2015 Recommendations, Auditor General Michael Pickup says government should be applauded for completing 75 per cent of promised actions made in response to over 200 audit recommendations from his 2014 and 2015 audits.

This is the government's best performance ever on completing prior audit recommendations and is up from the 53 per cent rate reported in 2014. This change in the last four years is significant.

The auditor general gives credit to government leaders and civil servants for their work which has resulted in actions being taken. He encourages government to maintain the focus and strive for higher completion rates within two years of the audits.

However, the auditor general is concerned that the Nova Scotia Health Authority has not completed its promised actions to publicly report surgical wait time targets. Wait times for surgery remain an issue. Currently, Nova Scotians needing hip and knee replacements generally wait a year and a half for surgery, excluding wait time for a referral appointment with a surgeon. The national benchmark for surgery wait times is six months - a standard accepted by the province. The auditor general indicated the health authority believes its detailed plan will allow it to meet national wait time targets for hip and knee replacements by 2020. However, there are no public targets outlining to Nova Scotians how the authority will significantly reduce wait times to make the 2020 goal.

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

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Media Contact: Darleen Langille
902-424-4108
Email: Darleen.Langille@novascotia.ca