

Government Slips in Implementation of Auditor General Recommendations

April 2022 Report on Follow-up of 2017, 2018, and 2019 Performance Audit Recommendations

For release April 26 - The government has faltered in its implementation of Auditor General recommendations from past performance audits and has critical work to do to get back on track, reveals a new Follow-up Report.

"The government has completed just 57% of the recommendations from 2019 Auditor General reports, one of the lower first-year follow-up rates seen by the Office in the past few years," says Auditor General Kim Adair.

For audit years 2017 and 2018, the government has completion rates of 91% and 90%, respectively.

"There are still recommendations that are not completed and it's incumbent on all Nova Scotians, and the Public Accounts Committee, to hold the government accountable and keep them moving to see these recommendations through to completion," says the Auditor General.

The Office of the Auditor General conducts audits to provide practical and constructive advice to improve government performance. If recommendations aren't completed, the same issues will persist and expose government to continued risks.

Although most recommendations from 2017 audits have been implemented, the Auditor General stressed four that are still outstanding.

"Given it has been over four years, we would expect all 2017 recommendations to be implemented by now," says Adair.

That includes key recommendations in the audits of Climate Change Management, Mental Health Services, and Managing Home Care Support Contracts.

Two of the four outstanding recommendations from 2017 audits include:

- The Nova Scotia Health Authority has not completed the recommendation to implement all of the emergency department safety recommendations identified in the January 2017 Improving Workplace Safety report

- The Nova Scotia Health Authority has not completed the recommendation to maintain an integrated record of home support complaints received, including their outcome

"These audits cover areas that are critical to the way government operates and they are areas that are important to all Nova Scotians," says Adair.

When the reports were released during 2017, government agreed to our recommendations and made a commitment to complete them.

The government has publicly said the agreed-upon timeframe to complete Auditor General recommendations is two years.

It's the first year the Office has followed up on recommendations from 2019. Although it's still within the two-year implementation timeframe, the Auditor General flags one recommendation from the Information Access and Privacy Information Technology report that examined the Freedom of Information Access website breach.

As of the follow-up report date, October 15, 2021, Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services had not completed the recommendations to conduct comprehensive risk assessments for IT projects prior to implementation or to establish a process to ensure and document vendor compliance with contract terms at all stages of a contract.

Implementing a project without mitigating the risks through a threat risk assessment leaves systems vulnerable, says the Auditor General.

"Risks around data integrity and unauthorized disclosure of personal information would be unknown."

"We encourage all organizations, including Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services, to work toward the timely completion of every recommendation we make, to help promote better government for all Nova Scotians," says Adair.

The full report, an infographic, and a highlight video are available at: www.oag-ns.ca

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