



Standing Committee on Oversight of Government Operations and Public Accounts

***Report on the Review of the 2023 Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the
Legislative Assembly of Nunavut: COVID-19 Vaccines in Nunavut***

**2nd Session of the 6th Legislative Assembly of Nunavut
Fall 2023 Sitting**

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Introduction

The Standing Committee on Oversight of Government Operations and Public Accounts held a televised hearing on this report on September 22, 2023.

The standing committee's hearing was held in the Chamber of the Legislative Assembly and was televised live across the territory. The hearing was open to the public and news media to observe from the Visitors' Gallery, and was livestreamed on the Legislative Assembly's website. The transcript from the standing committee's hearing is available on the Legislative Assembly's website.

Witnesses appearing before the standing committee included a number of senior officials from the Office of the Auditor General of Canada and the Government of Nunavut's departments of Health, Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs and Community and Government Services. The standing committee notes its appreciation to the witnesses.

Observations and Recommendations

Issue: Commitments to Provide Information

During the televised hearing, witnesses from the Department of Health made a number of commitments to provide additional information to the standing committee.

Standing Committee Recommendation #1:

The standing committee recommends that the Government of Nunavut's response to this report include the information items that were committed to during the televised hearing of September 22, 2023.

Issue: Pandemic Preparedness and Emergency Planning

The *2023 Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut: COVID-19 Vaccines in Nunavut* contained a total of four specific recommendations. The Department of Health formally agreed with all of the recommendations.

One of the Auditor General's recommendations was that the Department of Health "should update its health emergency and pandemic plan to take into account changes to the *Public Health Act* and lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic."

In its responses to the Auditor General's report, the department indicated that it is "updating the department's pandemic plan" and that "work is currently underway and should be completed by the end of 2023."

The standing committee notes that subsection 43(a) of the *Public Health Act* provides that one of the Minister of Health's "powers and duties" is to:

"advise the government on matters relating to public health not dealt with specifically under another Act, including making recommendations on public health matters for inclusion in Nunavut's emergency plans or to the Minister responsible for the *Emergency Measures Act* during the management of a public health emergency."

Standing Committee Recommendation #2:

The standing committee recommends that the Government of Nunavut's response to this report include a detailed update on the status of work to update the Department of Health's health emergency and pandemic plan, including the extent to which this work may require amendments to the *Public Health Act* and the *Emergency Measures Act*.

The standing committee further recommends that once the Department of Health's updated health emergency and pandemic plan has been finalized and approved, that it be made public through tabling in the Legislative Assembly and posting on the department's website.

Issue: Annual Reporting

The standing committee notes that section 43 of the *Public Health Act* provides, in part, that the Minister of Health:

(b) shall prepare an annual report within six months of the end of each calendar year respecting the reportable events, outbreaks, public health emergencies and number of inspections under this Act during the year;

(b.1) shall table the reports referred to in paragraph (b) and paragraph 44(6)(e) in the Legislative Assembly during the first sitting of the Assembly after each report is prepared.

Section 44 of the *Public Health Act* provides, in part, that the Chief Public Health Officer shall:

(e) shall prepare and publish, every two years, a report to the Executive Council regarding the health of people in Nunavut;

(j) may prepare a report on any matter of concern that, in the sole discretion of the Chief Public Health Officer, should be brought to the attention of the Legislative Assembly and provide it directly to the Speaker.

The Minister's 2020 annual report under subsection 43(b) was tabled in the Legislative Assembly on September 15, 2021. The 2021 annual report was tabled in the Legislative Assembly on November 4, 2022.

The Chief Public Health Officer of Nunavut's *2020-2021 Report on COVID-19* was tabled in the Legislative Assembly on September 15, 2021.

No reports have been tabled to date under subsection 44(e).

Standing Committee Recommendation #3:

The standing committee recommends that the Office of the Chief Public Health Officer prepare a final report on the COVID-19 pandemic and state of public health emergency that was in effect between March 20, 2020 and April 11, 2022.

The standing committee further recommends that this report be tabled in the Legislative Assembly at the earliest practicable opportunity.

The standing committee further recommends that the Government of Nunavut's response to this report clarify, in detail, the Department of Health's timeline for preparing and publishing the next annual report under subsection 44(e) of the *Public Health Act*.

Issue: Orientation, Training, Certification and Licensing of Health Care Staff

The *2023 Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut: COVID-19 Vaccines in Nunavut* contained a total of four specific recommendations. The Department of Health formally agreed with all of the recommendations.

One of the Auditor General's recommendations was that the Department of Health "should up should put in place systems to track the completion of orientation and training programs for health care staff, monitor whether their licences and certifications are up to date, and provide regular reports of overdue training and expired licences or certifications."

In its responses to the Auditor General's report, the department indicated that it "will work with the other Government of Nunavut departments on the design of the human resource modules within the newly procured Enterprise Resource Planning system."

The standing committee notes that the Enterprise Resource Planning system project is being managed by the Department of Finance.

Standing Committee Recommendation #4:

The standing committee recommends that the Government of Nunavut's response to this report provide a detailed update on the status of this work.

Issue: Public Health Surveillance System

The *2023 Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut: COVID-19 Vaccines in Nunavut* contained a total of four specific recommendations. The Department of Health formally agreed with all of the recommendations.

One of the Auditor General's recommendations was that the Department of Health "should implement a digital system enabling it to track and report on adverse events and disaggregated data in a complete, consistent, systematic, and timely manner."

In its responses to the Auditor General's report, the department indicated that it "commits to commence a planning project for Nunavut's Public Health Surveillance System in 2023-2024."

Standing Committee Recommendation #5:

The standing committee recommends that the Government of Nunavut's response to this report provide a detailed update on the status of this work, including a description of the extent to which it will enhance the department's capacity in respect to tracking and measuring determinants of health in the territory.

Issue: Inventory Management

The *2023 Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut: COVID-19 Vaccines in Nunavut* contained a total of four specific recommendations. The Department of Health formally agreed with all of the recommendations.

One of the Auditor General's recommendations was that the Department of Health "should implement a digital inventory system capable of tracking medications, including vaccines and related medical supplies, from their entry into the territory to their administration or use."

In its responses to the Auditor General's report, the department indicated that commits to submitting a business case in summer 2023, requesting resources needed to advance a digital tracking system ... As an interim measure, the Department of Health will create a manual tracking system by September 2023."

Standing Committee Recommendation #6:

The standing committee recommends that the Government of Nunavut's response to this report provide a detailed update on the status of this work.