



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

January 19, 2021

Auditor General reports on forest service roads, IT asset cybersecurity and international education

VICTORIA – The Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia has released three new audit reports. A summary of each report follows.

Report #1: Management of Forest Service Roads

Forest service roads (FSRs) are a highly valued part of the province’s transportation network. The audit assessed whether the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development managed safety and environmental risks on FSRs in accordance with its policies.

While FSRs are built primarily to access timber for forestry operations, they are often used for other industrial and commercial purposes, and provide important access to communities, private residences, recreation and wilderness areas. FSRs aren’t built or maintained to the same standards as public roadways, but proper upkeep is critical to help ensure the safety of road users and protect the environment.

Key findings

The audit concluded that the ministry did not manage safety and environmental risks on FSRs in accordance with its policies.

In 2019-2020, the natural resource districts received only about 25% of their budget requests for maintenance on roads they had deemed as priority. And about \$9 million worth of high-priority maintenance and repair work was unfunded.

“We found that the ministry did not complete critical maintenance and repairs on roads, bridges and major culverts that are part of the 58,000 kilometers of FSRs in the province,” said Michael Pickup, auditor general.

The audit also found that the ministry’s information on inventory, inspections and maintenance was inconsistent, difficult to share and, at times, inaccurate. These gaps made it challenging for the ministry to monitor and track maintenance activity.

Recommendations

The report includes nine recommendations to help the ministry meet its own expectations for undertaking inspection and maintenance work on FSRs. The recommendations include tracking information required to determine if inspections and repairs are completed on time and developing an approach to ensure that FSRs are adequately maintained.



Report #2: IT Asset Management in B.C. Government

Managing IT assets is the foundation for building strong defences against cybersecurity threats. The Government of B.C. relies heavily on technology to deliver services and programs to its residents. The risk of computer security incidents, such as cyberattacks, technology failures or human error, could result in interruptions to key services or unauthorized access to sensitive information.

This audit assessed whether the government is managing IT assets in accordance with good cybersecurity practices. The audit focused on five ministries: citizens' services, finance, health, education, and natural resource.

Key findings

Our audit concluded that ministries did not manage IT assets in accordance with good practices, with the exception of the Ministry of Education and the Office of the Chief Information Officer's Enterprise Services, which is part of the Ministry of Citizens' Services.

"The weaknesses identified in the audit could hinder the ministries' ability to develop and implement appropriate safeguards to protect IT assets from cybersecurity threats," Pickup said.

Shortcomings in management included:

- policies and standards lacked specific guidelines for identifying and managing IT assets for the purpose of managing cybersecurity risks;
- cybersecurity roles and responsibilities were not clearly established, including those for managing IT assets; and
- inventories of IT assets and maps of organizational communication and data flows were incomplete and inaccurate.

Recommendations

The report included seven recommendations to help government improve the management of its IT assets for cybersecurity, all of which were accepted by the ministries.

Report #3: Oversight of International Education Programs in Offshore and Group 4 Schools

This report looked at the ministry's oversight of two types of for-profit K-12 schools that deliver the B.C. curriculum to international students: offshore schools operating abroad and Group 4 schools in British Columbia.

Key findings

The ministry is generally effective in its oversight of these schools, but there are opportunities for improvement. One critical area that requires more focus is monitoring the business and financial capacity of school operators.

"These schools are operating in a highly competitive market with significant local and global economic pressures. It is one thing to demonstrate that you can afford to open a school, but another to show that you will be able to effectively operate it over the long term," Pickup said.



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International education plays a big part in B.C.'s economy. In 2017, more than 150,000 international students studied in the province., contributing \$4.7 billion to the economy from tuition and living expenses. This spending directly supported more than 35,000 jobs.

While most of those students were at post-secondary institutions, the experience of international K-12 students plays an important role in whether they choose to move on to B.C.'s post-secondary institutions.

“Effective oversight is critical to protecting the quality and reputation of our province’s education system and to preserving the flow of international students to the province,” Pickup said.

Recommendations

The report included eight recommendations to improve the oversight of offshore and Group 4 schools, all of which were accepted by the ministry. Specifically, Pickup recommended the ministry enhance its requirements for operators to include comprehensive five-year business plans, with forecasted enrolment and teacher recruitment strategies so that they can demonstrate their capacity to deliver quality B.C. education programs over the longer term.



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Related links

Management of Forest Service Roads

[Report](#)

[Video](#)

IT Asset Management in B.C. Government

[Report](#)

[Video](#)

Oversight of International Education Programs in Offshore and Group 4 Schools

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Pickup will answer questions pertaining to the reports via a news conference.

About the news conference

Date: January 19, 2021

Time: 10:00 a.m. (Pacific time)

Media dial-in information

From Vancouver: 604-681-0260

From elsewhere in Canada and the USA: 1-877-353-9184

Participant Pass Code: 44848#

During question-and-answer period

*To ask a question: press *1*

*To exit the question queue: press *2*

About the Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia

The auditor general is a non-partisan, independent officer of the legislature who reports directly to the legislative assembly. The *Auditor General Act* empowers the auditor general and staff to conduct audits, report findings and make recommendations.

Contact us

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