



2025 Report of the Auditor General of New Brunswick

Volume II - Performance Audit

AUDITOR GENERAL
OF NEW BRUNSWICK



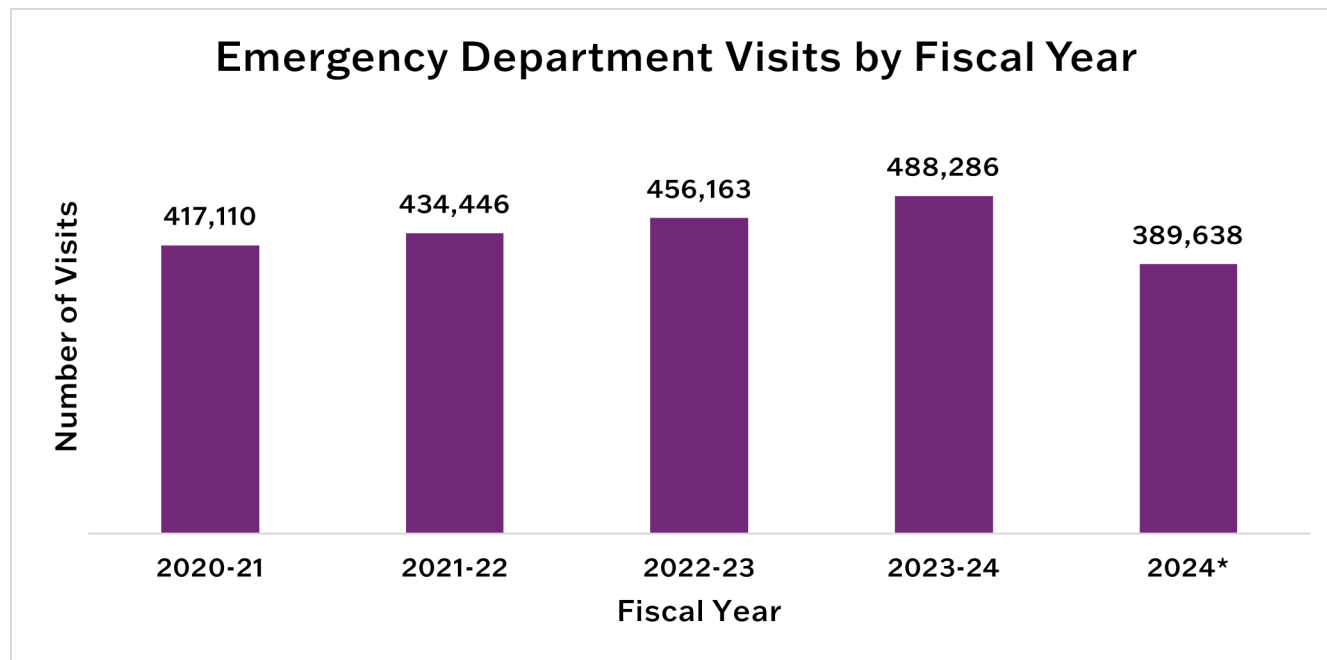
VÉRIFICATEUR GÉNÉRAL
DU NOUVEAU-BRUNSWICK

Emergency Health Services

Department of Health

Introduction

- There are over 400,000 visits per year at NB emergency departments
- The number of visits increased by 17% between 2020-21 and 2023-24



Source: Prepared by AGNB based on data from Regional Health Authorities (RHAs), (unaudited)

**April 1, 2024, to December 31, 2024*

Audit Objective

To determine if the Department of Health has effective oversight mechanisms in place to ensure timely access to, and adequate reporting on, emergency health services

Background

- The Department of Health is responsible for hospital services, including emergency departments:
 - planning
 - funding
 - monitoring
- Regional health authorities are responsible for the operations of 22 emergency departments

Key Findings

- Emergency room wait times consistently exceed established targets
- Lack of monitoring to analyze gaps and risk areas
- Insufficient treatment spaces in emergency departments
- Budget not aligned with service delivery needs
- No comprehensive strategy to address excessive wait times

Emergency Room Wait Times Exceed Established Targets

- Wait times for physician assessment were **not** met:
 - 66% all visits
 - 44% Triage Level I
 - 75% Triage Level II
 - 76% Triage Level III
 - 61% Triage Level IV
 - 29% Triage Level V

Wait Times For Physician Assessment

- Triage Level I
 - 77 patients waited over 2 hours
 - 11 patients waited more than 24 hours
- Triage Level II
 - 27,216 patients waited over 2 hours
 - 526 patients waited more than 24 hours
- Triage Level III
 - 33,586 patients waited over 6 hours
 - 347 patients waited more than 48 hours

Lack of Monitoring Risk Areas

- No review of:
 - Persons who left without being seen
 - 249,158 people left without being seen during our audit period
 - Persons pronounced deceased during emergency room visits
 - 2,199 persons deceased
 - 43% of deceased patients triaged as Level I not seen within the targeted time frame

Contributing Factors

- Insufficient treatment spaces
 - patients treated in hallways, offices, storage areas
 - physicians available but lack of treatment rooms
 - lack of hospital room availability impacting emergency rooms
- Budget not aligned with service delivery needs
 - current base budget established prior to 2008
 - no clarity on how budgets were established

Incomplete Reporting on Performance

- Department does not report on performance
 - Vitalité
 - does not:
 - record patient arrival time
 - publish data on targeted or actual wait times
 - Horizon
 - does:
 - record arrival time in 6/13 facilities
 - publish performance information on targets and results for level III acuity wait times

No Comprehensive Strategy to Address Excessive Wait Times

- Various initiatives underway but no overall strategy with:
 - goals
 - objectives
 - timelines
 - performance indicators

Urgent Priority Mental Health Services

- Established KPI is “same day”
- 26% of cases did not meet targeted time to be seen
- Data showed:
 - 540 (same day)
 - 124 between 1 and 14 days
 - 32 between 15 and 90 days
 - 2 between 91 and 152 days

Response to AGNB Recommendations

- 11 recommendations were made to the Department of Health
- The Department of Health agreed with all our recommendations

Implementation of *Weaving Our Voices Together*

New Brunswick's response to *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*

Department of Women's Equality

Introduction

- *Weaving Our Voices Together* (the plan)
 - released in September 2023
 - implementation and oversight assigned to Department of Women's Equality
 - included 39 planned actions with a 2-year target for completion

Audit Objective

To determine if the Department of Women's Equality has adequate systems and practices in place to implement, monitor and report on *Weaving Our Voices Together*, New Brunswick's response to *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*

Background

- Indigenous Peoples continue to face systemic barriers and vulnerabilities
- Statistics Canada reports 490 Indigenous women and girls were victim of homicide (2009-2021)
 - estimates believed to be underestimated
 - Women's Equality does not have NB specific statistics

Key Findings

- Inadequate oversight
- Lack of clarity on number of completed actions
- Inadequate monitoring and status reporting
- No process to update the plan
- Lack of performance indicators to assess impact
- Limited public reporting on progress

Inadequate Oversight

- The established oversight committees have not met since the launch of the plan in 2023:
 - Interdepartmental Working Group
 - NB Advisory Committee on Violence Against Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People

Lack of Clarity on Completed Actions

- Conflicting information received on number of completed actions
 - tracking mechanisms for the 39 actions not working as intended
 - reported numbers of completed actions were:
 - 1
 - 2
 - 4

Lack of Monitoring and Status Reporting

- Only requesting updates once a year for initiatives expected to be actioned in 2 years
- Internal tracking sheet being utilized inconsistently. Of the 39 actions:
 - 20 had no documented timeline for completion
 - 14 had timelines noted as “ongoing” or “in progress”
 - 5 identified a timeline

No Process to Update the Plan

- 11 new initiatives reported as started, without having been added to the plan
- Risks:
 - plan is incomplete or not achieving desired outcomes
 - lack of transparency and accountability

Lack of Performance Measurement

- Not analyzing data on numbers of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in NB
- No baselines or performance measures established to demonstrate impact of the plan and its actions

Limited Public Reporting on Progress

- Lack of transparency and accountability on plan progress
 - Women's Equality Departmental 2023-2024 Annual Report noted that 37 of the 39 actions have been “initiated or completed”

Response to AGNB Recommendations

- 11 recommendations were made to the Department of Women's Equality
- The Department of Women's Equality agreed with all our recommendations

Highway Safety

Department of Transportation and
Infrastructure

Introduction

- 18,000 kms of highways including 705 kms that are operated through Public-Private Partnerships (P3s)
- New Brunswick had the highest per capita collision fatality rate among Provinces (2023 Transport Canada)
- Key Risk Areas:
 - **Infrastructure**
 - **Drivers/Users**
 - **Vehicles**

Audit Objective

To determine if the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure (the Department) has adequate systems and practices in place to allow for the safe movement of people and goods in accordance with their mandate

Background

- Department:
 - to provide and support sustainable infrastructure that allows for the safe and efficient movement of people and goods
- New Brunswick Highway Corporation
 - three P3 contracts:
 - MRDC
 - Brun-Way
 - Gateway

Key Findings

- Lack of formalized highway safety plan
- Lack of performance measurement of highway safety outcomes
- Inadequate monitoring and oversight for:
 - P3s
 - Department operated highways
- Highways in poor condition
- Delays and inefficiencies in maintenance
- Inadequate documentation in capital planning

Lack of Formalized Highway Safety Plan

- The Department has not developed a provincial strategy regarding highway safety to reduce the number of fatal and serious injury collisions

Collision Data Not Processed and Analyzed in a Timely Manner

- Lack of timely data is impacting public reporting
- Of the 7,955 collision reports in 2023:
 - 80% took 1-2 years to be entered into database to support analysis
 - 20% took more than 2 years
- Missed opportunity to better analyze data for risks

No Key Performance Indicators for Safety

- No targets related to collision and fatality reduction
- Other provinces report publicly on safety related KPI's
 - examples:
 - fatalities per number of licensed drivers
 - collisions per vehicle kms traveled

Inadequate Monitoring and Oversight of P3 Highways

- Not ensuring the receipt of key reports required from all P3 operators:
 - MRDC not providing reports
 - Brun-Way/Gateway provided 95-100% of reports
- The reports received were not reviewed by the Department to ensure relevant contract requirements are being met

Inadequate Monitoring and Oversight of P3 Highways (continued)

The Department had **not** consistently:

- Completed required audits:
 - MRDC 38%
 - Brun-Way 78%
 - Gateway 60%
- Informed operators of audit findings
- Ensured timely corrective action
 - MRDC: 9 outstanding non-conformance notices (3 outstanding for more than 365 days)

Lack of Oversight - P3 Capital Rehabilitation

- Total amount of capital rehabilitation payments to P3 operators in 2023-24 was \$89.6 million
 - contracts specify by year:
 - amount to be paid
 - type of capital rehabilitation to be done
- Risks:
 - operators submit capital plans, but the department is not comparing plan to the contract requirements
 - contracted amounts paid without ensuring required work was done

Policy Requirements Not Being Met for Monitoring Department - Operated Highways

- Maintenance inspections not being carried out in compliance with the *Highway Maintenance Manual*
- Level of service for snow removal not being monitored for compliance with the *Winter Maintenance Service Policy*

Highways in Poor Condition

- Department operated highways
 - not meeting target for road conditions
 - 43% in poor or very poor condition
- P3 highways
 - Brun-Way: 96% in good or fair condition
 - Gateway: 89% in good or fair condition
 - MRDC: 45% in good or fair condition

Lack of Target for Repair Times for Department Operated Highways

	P3s	Department-Operated
• Pavement markings	45 days	No standard
• Debris/obstruction	24 hours	No standard
• Regulatory signs	1 day	No standard
• Guiderail	10 days	On priority basis

Untimely Maintenance- Department Operated Highways continued

- Guiderail repairs
 - 46% took more than 1 year
 - 17% took more than 3 years
- Wildlife fencing repairs
 - animals contributed to 23% of 2023 collisions
 - only 5/29 identified repairs were completed during our audit period
 - 4 took more than 365 days to complete

No Strategy to Repair High Priority Maintenance Tasks



Source: Prepared by AGNB based on department's Maintenance Needed system

Untimely Maintenance for Department - Operated Highways

- Repairs not actioned by priority level
 - Only 54% of completed repairs in fiscal year 2024 were ranked as high priority
- High priority repairs
 - 807 outstanding for 1-2 years
 - 563 outstanding for 2-3 years
 - 194 outstanding for 3-4 years
 - 304 outstanding for more than 4 years

No Documented Rationale for Changes to Asphalt and Chipseal Projects – Department - Operated Highways

- In a sample of 26 changes made to the capital plan, none had adequate documented rationale
- Approved projects:
 - 27% not identified as requiring work by the asset management system
 - 22% were recommended for work at the later date by the asset management system

Response to AGNB Recommendations

- 24 recommendations were made to the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure
- The Department of Transportation and Infrastructure agreed with all our recommendations



Status of the Implementation of Performance Report Recommendations

Background – Follow-Up Process

- We perform follow-up procedures in years 2, 3 and 4 following our reports
- In year 4, we identify high-risk areas for additional work

Status of Implementation

- 2021 – 100%
- 2022 – 83%
- 2023 – 32%

2021 – Status of Implementation

Year	Chapter Title [Total Number of Recommendations]	% of Recommendations Implemented
2021	Funding for Rural Internet - Regional Development Corporation and Opportunities New Brunswick [13]	100%
	COVID-19 Funding - NB Workers' Emergency Income Benefit - Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour [15]	100%
	Risks Exist in Government Oversight of Crown Agencies - Executive Council Office [5]	100%
	Residential Energy Efficiency Programs - Department of Natural Resources and Energy Development, NB Power [7]	100%
	Crown Agency Salary and Benefits Practices - Executive Council Office and Department of Finance and Treasury Board [2]	100%

2022 – Status of Implementation

Year	Chapter Title [Total Number of Recommendations]	% of Recommendations Implemented
2022	Liquor Industry Development in New Brunswick - New Brunswick Liquor Corporation [19]	95%
	Oversight of the Employee Health and Dental Benefit Plan - Department of Finance and Treasury Board [14]	57%
	Contaminated Sites - Department of Environment and Local Government [17]	94%
	Environmental Trust Fund - Department of Environment and Local Government [9]	78%

2023 – Status of Implementation

Year	Chapter Title [Total Number of Recommendations]	% of Recommendations Implemented
2023	COVID-19 Pandemic Response: Oversight - Executive Council Office [5]	40%
	Pandemic Preparedness and Response in Nursing Homes - Department of Social Development [8]	0%
	Workers' Compensation Payment Mechanisms in the Public Sector - Department of Finance and Treasury Board [1]	0%
	Pandemic Preparedness and Response - Department of Education and Early Childhood Development [5]	80%
	COVID-19 Pandemic Response - Department of Health [7]	0%
	Pandemic Preparedness and Response - Department of Justice and Public Safety [6]	0%
	Out-of-Province Travel - Select School Districts - Department of Education and Early Childhood Development [6]	100%