

NEWS RELEASE

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Province not adequately addressing drinking water quality safety risks: Auditor General

WINNIPEG – The Department of Conservation and Climate needs to do more to ensure the safety of drinking water in Manitoba, says Auditor General Tyson Shtykalo. The findings are contained in the report, *Provincial Oversight of Drinking Water Safety*, released today.

The audit found the Department's processes for licensing and monitoring drinking water systems did not adequately address safety risks. The audit also found the Department had weak strategic planning and performance measurement processes for overseeing drinking water safety.

"The people and organizations that supply drinking water to Manitobans must ensure that water is safe to drink," Shtykalo said. "While Manitoba has not had any major outbreaks of waterborne diseases recently, the Department needs to remain vigilant and do more to minimize the risk of problems in the future."

The Auditor General found 20% of known water systems in Manitoba did not have an operating licence. A licence outlines what a system operator must do to meet regulatory requirements, including the water quality standards they must meet and the frequency of testing required. Most of these unlicensed systems were testing drinking water, but not at the expected frequency.

Further, Shtykalo noted an estimated half of known water systems in the province did not have a certified operator. "Although many of these systems were very small, it is important that all water systems, no matter the size, have an operator who has received appropriate training and understands the system and safety requirements," Shtykalo said.

The audit found the number of licensed drinking water systems in Manitoba nearly doubled over five years, but the number of staff assigned to license and monitor these systems decreased. As well, more work was required to bring non-compliant water systems into compliance with provincial regulations, the report says.

In addition, Shtykalo said the Department does not have a clear, robust plan to address the many risks to drinking water safety. “Given the limited resources available, and increasing workload, it is important that the Department carefully plan how to address the issues noted in this report,” Shtykalo said.

The report contains 18 recommendations. **To view the report, please visit**
<http://www.oag.mb.ca/reports>.

ABOUT THE AUDITOR GENERAL OF MANITOBA

The Auditor General is an officer of the Legislative Assembly mandated to provide independent assurance and advice to Members of the Legislative Assembly. Through its audits, the Office of the Auditor General seeks to identify opportunities to strengthen government operations and enhance performance management and reporting. For more information visit <http://www.oag.mb.ca/>

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