

NEWS RELEASE

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Auditor General releases report on provincial hazard assessment system

Edmonton, Alberta, Canada ... Auditor General Doug Wylie released an audit on September 29 examining the effectiveness of Alberta's provincial hazard assessment system.

The report – *Provincial Hazard Assessment for Emergency Management* – assesses if the Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA) has an effective system to coordinate a provincial hazard assessment to identify provincial emergency management priorities for mitigation and preparedness activities.

“For a government to reduce risk, plan for, and respond to calamities like flooding, wildfires and pandemics, it must understand the extent of Alberta's cumulative disaster risk now and in the future,” said Wylie. “A province-wide hazard assessment system is a key building block for an effective provincial emergency management system. It can help the government make informed, province-wide decisions on funding, policies, and other planning and mitigation strategies.”

The audit found AEMA has elements of a provincial hazard assessment system, however, improvements are needed for the system to be effective in allowing the AEMA, its partners, and government to assess the total disaster risk in Alberta. Specifically, the audit found:

- AEMA drafted a preliminary provincial hazard assessment in 2014-2015, but it was not completed.
- AEMA has not defined clearly the roles and responsibilities for developing and maintaining the provincial hazard assessment, nor does it have an adequate plan to guide the assessment.
- The provincial hazard assessment methodology is also lacking critical elements, including a mechanism to evaluate hazards, and a step to identify hazard treatment options.
- Since 2011, post-incident disaster reviews have included several recommendations to AEMA on the hazard assessment system, however, AEMA has weaknesses in its systems to monitor the status of outstanding recommendations.

Based on the findings of the audit, the report includes two recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the provincial hazard assessment system.

Wylie added it is important to note that this audit was completed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, and therefore does not evaluate the Government of Alberta's pandemic plan or its response.

“However, the COVID-19 pandemic shows us the cascading effects that a disaster can have on our lives,” Wylie said. “It reinforces why an effective, integrated provincial hazard assessment system is critical to helping the government, prepare, respond and recover from disasters and emergencies.”

To read the report, please go to www.oag.ab.ca

Appointed under Alberta's Auditor General Act, the Auditor General is the legislated auditor of every provincial ministry, department, and most provincial agencies, boards, commissions, and regulated funds. The audits conducted by the Office of the Auditor General report on how government is managing both its responsibilities and the province's resources.

– 30 –

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