

NEWS RELEASE

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Improvement needed in government reporting of results for COVID-19 programs

Edmonton, Alberta, Canada... A new report issued by the Auditor General of Alberta highlights the need for improved reporting to demonstrate ministry accountability for results related to COVID-19 programs.

The Government of Alberta spent over \$4 billion responding to COVID-19 in 2020-21. Since annual reports are a key accountability tool for the government, the Auditor General analyzed how well the government reported its COVID-19 programs in the 2020-21 annual reports.

The *Fiscal 2021 Annual Reporting of COVID-19 Initiatives Report* found that COVID-19 information in the results analysis sections of the annual reports did not give a clear picture of the \$4 billion of spending. These sections:

- did not always include spending and results
- were not comparable across ministries
- did not always cross reference information

The report noted examples of ministries with good reporting practices integrating financial and non-financial information.

“Meaningful results analyses in annual reports are necessary for the government to demonstrate accountability,” said Auditor General Doug Wylie. “Without effective COVID-19 reporting, readers cannot tell what the government achieved in spending \$4 billion on programs to help Albertans during the pandemic.”

The Auditor General is not making a new recommendation because these findings support an existing 2019 recommendation made to Treasury Board and Finance to improve:

- guidance and training for ministry management to identify, analyze and report on results in ministry annual reports and
- processes to monitor ministry compliance with results analysis reporting standards

In March 2022, the Ministry of Treasury Board and Finance gave ministries instructions on the required content for the 2021-22 annual reports. These instructions include guidance on having a dedicated COVID-19 section.

The report was made public on June 29, 2022 and is available at www.oag.ab.ca.

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Appointed under Alberta's Auditor General Act, the Auditor General is the legislated auditor of every provincial ministry, department, public post-secondary institution, 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 its responsibilities and the province's resources. Through our audit reports, we provide independent assurance to the 87 Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, and the people of Alberta, that public money is spent properly and provides value.

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