



**Third Session – Forty-Third Legislature**  
of the  
**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**  
**Standing Committee**  
on  
**Public Accounts**

*Chairperson*  
*Mr. Kelvin Goertzen*  
*Constituency of Steinbach*



**Vol. LXXX No. 5 - 5 p.m., Friday, April 17, 2026**

**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Forty-Third Legislature**

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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA  
THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS**

**Friday, April 17, 2026**

**TIME – 5 p.m.**

**LOCATION – Winnipeg, Manitoba**

**CHAIRPERSON – Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach)**

**VICE-CHAIRPERSON – MLA Jim Maloway (Elmwood)**

**ATTENDANCE – 7 QUORUM – 6**

*Members of the committee present:*

*Mr. Brar, MLAs Compton, Devgan,  
Messrs. Goertzen, Guenter, MLA Maloway,  
Mr. Wharton*

*Substitutions:*

*Mr. Wharton for Mr. Ewasko  
Mr. Guenter for Mrs. Stone*

**APPEARING:**

*Tyson Shtykalo, Auditor General*

**WITNESSES:**

*Brenda DeSerranno, Deputy Minister of Public  
Service Delivery*

**MATTERS UNDER CONSIDERATION:**

*Auditor General's Report – Follow-Up of Previously  
Issued Recommendations, dated March 2023*

*Vital Statistics Agency*

*Auditor General's Report – Follow-Up of Previously  
Issued Recommendations, dated February 2025*

*Vital Statistics Agency*

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**The Chairperson:** Good afternoon, again. Will the Standing Committee on Public Accounts please come to order.

**Committee Substitutions**

**The Chairperson:** Before we begin with our business today, I'd like to inform the committee that we've received the following membership substitutions for this meeting only: Mr. Wharton for Mr. Ewasko and Mr. Guenter for MLA Stone.

\* \* \*

**The Chairperson:** This meeting has been called to consider the following reports: the Auditor General's Report, Follow-Up of Previously Issued Recommendations, dated March 2023, Vital Statistics Agency; and the Auditor General's Report, Follow-Up of Previously Issued Recommendations, dated February 2025, Vital Statistics Agency.

Are there any suggestions from the committee as to how long we should sit this afternoon?

**MLA Jim Maloway (Elmwood):** I would suggest we sit for an hour unless there's—questions are—don't take up the full hour.

**The Chairperson:** MLA Maloway has suggested the committee sit for one hour—up to an hour. Is that agreed? *[Agreed]*

At this time I would also ask the committee if there is leave for all witnesses in attendance to speak and answer questions on the record if desired. Is that agreed? *[Agreed]*

Also, I'd like to remind everyone that questions and comments must be put through the Chair using third-person vernacular as opposed to directly to members and witnesses.

Before we proceed, I'd like to inform all in attendance of the process that is undertaken with regard to outstanding questions. At the end of every meeting, the research clerk reviews Hansard for any outstanding questions that witnesses commit to provide an answer to, and they will draft a questions-pending-response document to send to the deputy minister or other witnesses.

Upon receipt of the answers to those questions, the research clerk then forwards the response to every PAC member and to every other member recorded as attending that meeting.

And now, I'd like to thank everybody for attending on this Friday afternoon and ask the Auditor General if he would wish to make an opening statement.

**Mr. Tyson Shtykalo (Auditor General):** I'd like to introduce assistant auditor general, Bo-Maguire, who's joining me this evening.

Mr. Chair, Vital Statistics plays a critical role in Manitoba by maintaining millions of records of vital events, some dating back to 1882. All Manitobans have a vested interest in ensuring this information is properly protected against unauthorized access, use, disclosure or destruction. A failure to provide appropriate safeguards could compromise the integrity of vital events information and result in significant privacy concerns.

In our audit released in September 2020, we wanted to determine whether the Vital Statistics branch, now under the Department of Public Service Delivery, was properly managing the security and privacy risks associated with vital events information and properly managing the integrity of vital events information. We found several weaknesses in how vital events information was managed and made 19 recommendations to address those weaknesses. The audit report was discussed and passed by this committee on June 20, 2022.

Since that time, my office has conducted two follow-ups on the implementation status of the recommendations, one as at September 2022 and one as at September 2024. As of our last follow-up, eight of our 19 recommendations were implemented.

Mr. Chair, this concludes my opening remarks. I look forward to the committee's discussion of this report.

**The Chairperson:** I thank the Auditor General for their opening statement and for their work and ask the deputy minister if they would wish to make an opening statement, and if they do, would you please introduce the staff that are joining you here today?

**Ms. Brenda DeSerranno (Deputy Minister of Public Service Delivery):** I'd like to start by introducing Kathryn Durkin-Chudd, assistant deputy minister of Consumer Protection Division in the Department of Public Service Delivery, and she has responsibility for the Vital Statistics branch.

Also with me today are Krista Armstrong, director of the Vital Statistics branch in the Department of Public Service Delivery; and Wes Dropko from the Department of Innovation and New Technology, and Wes is the IT manager for Vital Statistics.

So I want to thank the Chair and the committee for the invitation to the department to provide an update on our response and actions to date.

In September of 2020, we received the report with 19 recommendations to strengthen the security,

privacy and integrity of vital events information that's managed by the Vital Statistics branch. And the work focused on protecting sensitive records such as births, deaths, marriages and ensuring controls were appropriate for the volume and sensitivity of information that was held.

The OAG's recommendations highlighted, at the time, a lack of risk and privacy assessments, physical and digital security gaps, information-sharing vulnerabilities, event register oversight and, as well, outdated policies and procedures. Overall, the report identified the need for stronger governance, clearer accountability and more consistent safeguards for how vital events data is handled and shared.

I am very pleased to advise that as of October of 2025, our department has implemented 18 of the 19 recommendations. We did make a decision not to implement the remaining recommendation due to potential accessibility and financial impacts on Manitobans. And we've also implemented all of the confidential security measures that were recommended in the report, and those controls are now embedded in regular operations and oversight.

Since the audit was released, the branch has undertaken a multi-year transformation that included major physical security renovations, system and access control enhancements, strengthened privacy and information-sharing practices, modernization of policies and training and the elimination of operational backlogs. This work occurred while the organization transitioned from a special operating agency to a core government branch in March of 2021, meaning that the improvements were delivered through regular departmental governance and appropriations.

Over the course of the implementation, the branch also prioritized operational changes to eliminate a significant backlog of applications for birth, marriage and death certificates. This has improved service predictability for Manitobans who rely on these documents to access programs and services. The average turnaround time to issue birth, marriage and death certificates is now eight business days.

Processing times for vital event registration has also been significantly reduced. In May of 2023, the average processing time for birth registrations was 66 days, and 241 days for death registrations. Now the processing time for birth registrations is six days; and death registrations, within three days of receiving them. That supports timely updates across government programs and improves overall service delivery.

So I'm happy to report that the Auditor General's recommendations have resulted in lasting improvements, and the branch now operates with stronger security, improved service delivery and embedded governance practices.

**The Chairperson:** I thank the deputy minister for their report, along with the staff and the work that it took to get to some of what was reported in the statement by the deputy minister.

The floor is now open to questions.

**MLA Carla Compton (Tuxedo):** Well, I'm delighted to hear from the deputy minister the time frame improvements, as I have many folks in my world—particularly the birth registrations is something of a concern. So I applaud the ministry's improvements in those numbers.

One of the things I'm curious on for the deputy minister—or some of her team, perhaps—to respond to, is, in the recommendations, there's one that has a do-not-intend-to-implement, and that's around, is it the letters, I believe—or like, the going fully electronic and still maintaining the hard copy, right? The mailing-in option, I believe it is.

**The Chairperson:** Just for clarification, I think in—it's regards to using standard mail as opposed to registered mail.

**MLA Compton:** So, yes, the using standard mail versus registered mail. And I'm just wondering if someone—the deputy minister or someone—could just speak a little bit more to that.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you.

\* (17:10)

**Ms. DeSerranno:** So we assessed the recommendation and we completed a jurisdictional scan. There's only one province that uses registered mail. We do use a courier for priority delivery, but we use regular mail. We determined that mandatory registered mail would create financial and accessibility barriers.

Registered mail in Canada is \$13, and it's \$26 outside of Canada. So it would create a barrier for some people trying to obtain their certificates with a cost attached to it like that. So we've achieved our document security through layered internal and operational controls.

Although registered mail adds an extra layer of risk mitigation, because of the barriers that would be posed to Manitobans, we decided that it was not an appropriate measure to implement.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you, Deputy.

Follow up, MLA Compton and then MLA Devgan.

**MLA Compton:** So just a further follow-up to that. I'm curious if there are further security measures put in place or just measures should—we know it happens sometimes that mail gets misplaced, whether intentionally or not. So is there a process in place that, should it have—something been mailed out, you get the phone call or however it gets communicated, like, is there a clear process of how to remedy if things don't get delivered, or not?

**Ms. DeSerranno:** So, you're right, sometimes mail gets lost occasionally. So we do have a process in place in the branch to address that when somebody does not receive their certificate: they can sign a declaration that they haven't received it. Each certificate is numbered, so we are able to track each and every one. They will receive a new one and the one that they did not receive will be noted as it is to be destroyed, and we'll have that on record in our system.

**MLA JD Devgan (McPhillips):** So one of the recommendations, I guess, is the reason for not implementing it cited is cost barrier. So my question is actually for the AG: When coming up with that recommendation, what was the thought given to that and what is the response from the AG on cost being a barrier?

**Mr. Shtykalo:** Yes, thanks for the question.

During this audit we focused on the risk of the security of the information, noted that using regular mail, there's an increased risk of losing it. Our recommendation was on recommending using registered mail because it lowers the risk of this information, these documents going missing.

Part—we didn't consider the cost in the recommendation. That's for a common element of all our recommendations that we make. We make recommendations to address the risk we identify. It's up to the department, then, to do the risk analysis and the cost benefit of adopting the recommendation or finding alternate ways to mitigate the risk.

**The Chairperson:** Follow-up, MLA Devgan?

**MLA Devgan:** Just, I guess, for fun, just to poke further: How does the Auditor General feel about the response from the department in not implementing that because of the barrier? Is the AG satisfied with the department's response, or does the office still feel that this recommendation should be implemented and

maybe finding unique ways to mitigate that cost on the average Manitoban?

**Mr. Shtykalo:** If I was to redo this audit and with the same objective and criteria, we would probably still note that there's a risk in using registered mail, but I did hear in the response that there were some mitigating measures that were put into place in the case that some information does go missing.

So, you know, I'm satisfied that they took the recommendation seriously and assessed their action appropriately, but you can never eliminate the risk entirely.

**MLA Maloway:** I'm reminded of how the passport office works. I mean, you can go down there in person and they give you—they help you get the documents filed, which is what I assume you do, too. And then, they give you an option. You can pick it up in person if you want on a certain date; I don't remember paying anything more for that. So, if it can do it there, why can't we do something like that here?

In addition, you have ID being replaced in all the Autopac agencies around the city, right? You've got MLA offices in every constituency. I don't see why this would be a big issue with security. I do understand that if you put it in the mail, it can get lost, and—but why wouldn't you—I'm assuming you can go to your office directly and make an application for a birth certificate and stuff like that? You can do that? Then why can't you come back to pick it up?

**Ms. DeSerranno:** Yes, you can come back to pick it up, honourable Chair; that is an option. The one thing that I neglected, I think, to explain adequately in my first answer: there is obviously a financial cost, which would be prohibitive for some Manitobans, but there's also an issue of accessibility.

So when you get registered mail, you need identification to get your mail from the post office when you're picking it up—the drug store, wherever you're picking it up from. There's many people in Manitoba that don't have identification and, in fact, this birth certificate might be the identification, their first piece of identification that we need.

So that's another barrier that we don't want to impose on Manitobans. But you're absolutely correct. We do—people can certainly come to the office. We do have people come to the office and we help them with their application and they can come and pick up their birth certificate as well.

**The Chairperson:** MLA Maloway, on a follow-up.

**MLA Maloway:** Yes, I think that solves part of the problem. Then the question is, why are you mailing these things in the first place, really, if the person is willing to come and pick them up?

And the other question is where—what other area you would use. I mean, I guess if a person wants registered mail, like, they're willing to pay for it, then you could register the mail.

**Ms. DeSerranno:** We do offer courier service. If people want to pay for courier service, we'll have it couriered directly to them.

**Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows):** My question is related to the training co-ordinator position that was filled in July 2024 and there were no training events organized until September 30, 2024. Can the department reflect on how many and what kind of trainings have been organized since September 30, 2024?

\* (17:20)

**Ms. DeSerranno:** So, yes, the recommendation to periodically train the event registrars was a recommendation that we followed up on, and in July of 2024, we created and filled the position of quality insurance—assurance and training coordinator. One of their responsibilities is to train event registrars.

As of January 27, 2025, all event registrars have been provided guides and training documents to follow when completing vital statistics documentation. Additionally, training sessions were delivered in March, April and June of 2025, and additional training sessions are scheduled to follow: continuous training, which is linked to the cycles and modernization initiatives, such as the electronic death registration, which will be launched this year. So it is an ongoing process with the training.

**The Chairperson:** Question regarding—and this is more—some of this will have been resolved because of the wait times being brought down. When there's an emergency situation, I know everybody's in a hurry to get their certificates, but it's come up more often than I would have imagined where somebody passes away out of country on a vacation. Their spouse is unable to get possession of the remains because the funeral home out of country needs a marriage certificate to prove that the relationship is as they describe it to be.

Is there a part of the branch that deals in emergency situations like that to deal with those—unusual and unfortunate, but actually not that unprecedented?

**Ms. DeSerranno:** So we do have a three-day rush service. And that is embedded into the branch. The branch will assist people who find themselves in that unfortunate situation. It is a situation that the branch has dealt with on a number of occasions. And that's why we do offer the three-day rush service.

There is, of course, protocol built in because we have to protect against identity theft. But the staff works with whoever it is that needs the certificate to ensure that they can meet that protocol and then are able to provide the three-day rush service.

**The Chairperson:** Yes, that's helpful information. And it might be information that MLAs more generally might—you might distribute and provide that and maybe other information you think is helpful because we do get lots of inquiries—not on that particular fact situation—but just other fact situations. And sometimes it would be helpful to have that on hand.

Other questions?

**MLA Compton:** I'm just curious—as so many of the recommendations have come forth and it sounds like it's been a while that these processes are in place—if the department can share what their regular review process is like. I'm curious if, now that the recommendations from the AG have been implemented or mostly implemented, if there's emerging things that the department is noticing, areas of improvement that are identifying themselves, or if the practice is to wait for the next AG review for that.

**Ms. DeSerranno:** I think one of the keys—and the team that you see sitting here today is actually responsible for the success of the Vital Stats branch. I only started with the department in September of 2025 and cannot take any credit, but this team absolutely did all of that hard work to implement all of this and get rid of that backlog and not just get rid of the backlog, but to maintain it.

So one of the things that is important is we publish on our website the wait times for your certificates. It is under two weeks, and you can see each week. And it ranges anywhere between 1.2 and 1.7 weeks. So one of the things we want to do is to continue to be transparent, and so we're looking at new website enhancements that will publish the registration time in addition to the certificate time.

Another thing that we're doing is bringing forward the electronic death registration, and that is part of long-term plans that we have around IT for the branch.

So registrars will be able to registrar it without coming down in person or through mail; they will be able to do it electronically.

In terms of everything else that we did—and IT is a very big important part of Vital Statistics—but in terms of all the policies, those are reviewed every two years. Our privacy assessments are reviewed on a continual basis.

The success that this branch has had at reducing the—eliminating the backlog and implementing all of these is because they've embedded everything into their daily work. It wasn't just get one of the recommendations complete and be done with it. They've embedded it into their daily work.

**The Chairperson:** Follow-up, MLA Compton?

**MLA Compton:** So I'm just—it sounds like this is amazing team. What is the—is there, like, a quarterly review or an annual review of, like, that snapshot of how are we doing or where are we identifying specific areas that we believe we can do even better, you know? Maybe moving it from two weeks to a week and a half or a week—those kinds of things. Are—is there a specific or intentional process that's planned for that kind of review and reflection and then planning ahead.

**Ms. DeSerranno:** So, in addition to the reporting that you see on the website, the deputy minister—my office and the minister's office receives weekly reporting from Vital Statistics branch, and it's a spreadsheet with—I can't count the number of tabs, but I want to say eight or nine tabs. So, in effect, it came today, not too long before I came to this meeting and so the minister and I are both able to see on a weekly basis and historically how the branch is doing through many different facets that they're working on.

As well, through their management meetings internally in the branch, in my meetings with the assistant deputy minister and at our executive management meetings, that's where we talk about continuous improvement and building off the hard work that this team has done and been so successful with the branch is definitely something that the branch, the minister and the department wants to keep building on.

We also have a new policy and program analyst which is a great benefit to the branch in terms of looking at new opportunities for us to achieve continuous improvement.

**The Chairperson:** Just a—might be the last question on technology. You said you're undergoing a technology change in electronic or online death certificate applications. Will people be able to track the, sort of, where that is at? Obviously, if you're not using registered mail, you may not be able to track the mailing part of it, but would they be able to tell that it's been processed and that it's been sent?

Or maybe it's—any other sort of certificates—will they be able to—will they be given a number and they can put it online and sort of see where they are in the process?

\* (17:30)

**Ms. DeSerranno:** So I am happy to say that, in terms of certificates, if you have an application for a certificate, you already can track it online on our website.

The electronic death registration is a little bit different. That's for registrars to be able to register a death, not having to do it in person or by mail. But if you do have a certificate application, then you can currently track it online.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you. You can tell it's been a while since I've done a birth certificate application, and probably don't have any more in the future.

Oh, MLA Devgan?

**MLA Devgan:** Not a question, but I don't think her mic was on. Hopefully, Hansard caught that response. Her mic wasn't on for that response.

**The Chairperson:** Was the mic not on? *[interjection]* Can I just get you to repeat the last answer on the tracking?

And I thank MLA Devgan for catching that, and for our Hansard folks, if you could you just repeat the last answer.

**Ms. DeSerranno:** Yes. So on our website, if you apply for a certificate, you can currently track the status of your certificate.

The electronic death registration is something a little bit different. That is for registrars, so that registrars—and we're talking about, you know, funeral homes, for example. They are able to submit that registration online rather than having to do it via mail or in person.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you.

Other questions?

Seeing no other questions, I'll put the questions on the chapters.

The committee agree to complete consideration of the chapter Vital Statistics Agency within the Auditor General's Report, Follow-Up of Previously Issued Recommendations, dated March 2023? *[Agreed]*

This chapter is accordingly completed for consideration.

Does the committee agree to complete the consideration of the chapter Vital Statistics Agency within the Auditor General's Report, Follow-Up of Previously Issued Recommendations, dated February 2025? *[Agreed]*

This chapter is accordingly completed for consideration.

Before the committee rises, I'd like to ask all the members to please leave behind copies of the report so they can be used again for future meetings or for recycling.

I'd like to thank the Auditor General and their staff for being here on a Friday, and I'd like to thank the department and all the staff, both for being here and also for the work that you've reported on. I know there will be many residents of Manitoba who will be happy to hear that.

The hour now being 5:32, what does the committee—

**Some Honourable Members:** Committee rise.

**The Chairperson:** Committee rise.

**COMMITTEE ROSE AT:** 5:32 p.m.

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