

3. Inspections

During the year we reviewed inspection programs related to Government's inspections of food premises, child care facilities and bridges. Inspections are required to be performed to gather sufficient information necessary to make a determination as to whether there is compliance with legislation and Government policy, and whether public health and safety is being compromised. Significant weaknesses were found in the inspection activities reviewed during the year.

I am concerned that Government is not doing a good job with its inspection activities. Government should ensure that sufficient inspections are conducted to make a determination as to whether there is compliance with legislation and Government policy, and whether public health and safety is being compromised.

Chapter 2

Comments on Audits and Additional Examinations

2.1 Audit of the House of Assembly

In May 2000, the *Internal Economy Commission Act* was amended so that the accounts of the House of Assembly were to be audited annually by an auditor appointed by the Commission of Internal Economy. As a result, my Office has not had access to the accounts and records of the House of Assembly since then and the expenditures of the House of Assembly have not been subject to audit for the past four fiscal years.

On 24 June 2003, a public accounting firm was appointed to audit the House of Assembly for the years ended 31 March 2002, 2003 and 2004. However, the audit was not completed before the Public Accounts of the Province were tabled in the House of Assembly.

The fundamental role of the Auditor General is to bring an independent legislative audit and reporting process to bear upon the review of all accounts of the Province and provides an increased level of accountability of Government. Therefore, by not allowing the Auditor General to audit the revenues and expenditures of the House of Assembly, accountability is diminished.

I urge the Members of the House of Assembly to give the Auditor General unrestricted access, in accordance with the *Auditor General Act*, to audit the accounts of the House of Assembly.

2.2 Framework of Accountability

There is no legislative requirement for all Government departments and Crown agencies to prepare and table strategic and operational plans in the House of Assembly or to table performance reports on their activities in comparison to these plans.

During 2002-03 all Government departments as well as 77 of the 85 Crown agencies had some form of annual report for 2001-02 tabled in the House of Assembly. While this represents a significant increase in the number of reports tabled over previous years, the reports that were tabled, in general, did not provide information on the performance of each entity in relation to its approved plans using established measurable criteria. As a result, the entities have not provided the information required to truly demonstrate their accountability to the House of Assembly.

A true accountability process would include more than the tabling of a performance report - it would also require the tabling of strategic and operational plans so that Members of the House of Assembly would have the information necessary to compare an entity's performance in relation to its goals and objectives.

2.3 Special Warrants

The common parliamentary means of providing spending authority to government is through the annual passing of supply acts. This involves having the Members of the House of Assembly vote on the government's funding requests before the spending authority is provided. Approval by a majority of the Members of the House of Assembly is needed to pass an Act.

Through the use of a "special warrant", Government can, without the prior debate and approval of the Members of the House of Assembly, spend public money.

During 2002-03, Government issued 12 special warrants totalling \$24.2 million.