

Chapter 4

Child Care Facilities Follow Up

1.0 MAIN POINTS

This chapter is a follow up of the recommendations from our 2010 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 5. The Ministry of Education (Ministry) has made significant progress in addressing our recommendations regarding its regulation of child care facilities.

The Ministry now provides additional guidance to employees to help them carry out unscheduled visits to child care facilities. Ministry senior management receives quarterly reports on non-compliance with child care regulations. The Ministry has not yet publicly reported trends in compliance with the regulations but plans to do so in its 2011-12 annual report.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

The Ministry is responsible under *The Child Care Act* to set standards for child care, and to license and inspect child care facilities. The purpose of the Ministry's Early Learning and Child Care Program is to support families and communities by promoting high quality care for children in a safe, nurturing environment. The Ministry licenses and monitors child care facilities and provides information about child care to the public. If the Ministry does not have adequate processes to regulate child care facilities, the safety and well-being of children receiving care may be at risk.

In 2010, we assessed whether the Ministry had adequate processes to regulate child care facilities. In our 2010 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 5 (pp. 62-69), we concluded that, for the year ending February 28, 2010, the Ministry's processes to regulate child care facilities were adequate except for monitoring and reporting facilities' compliance with *The Child Care Regulations* (Regulations).

On January 19, 2011, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts agreed with our recommendations.

3.0 STATUS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

This section sets out two previous recommendations and the Ministry's actions to March 31, 2012. The Ministry has met one of the recommendations and has made progress on the other recommendation.



3.1 Guidance for Inspections During Unscheduled Visits

We recommended that the Ministry of Education monitor key health, safety, and programming requirements of *The Child Care Regulations* during unscheduled visits to child care facilities and document its findings. (2010 Report – Volume 1)

Status – Implemented.

In our 2010 audit, we found that Ministry employees used a standard checklist to conduct initial inspections and annual reviews. The checklist was based on the Regulations and permitted Ministry employees to record their findings consistently. The Ministry provided less guidance to Ministry employees for carrying out unscheduled visits, and inspection notes did not consistently comment on key aspects of the Regulations, such as safe play areas, nutrition, or access to suitable toys or equipment.

The Ministry has established a template to guide Ministry employees in their unscheduled visits. Ministry employees are using the template to more consistently document whether child care facilities are meeting key health, safety, and programming requirements of the Regulations.

3.2 Quarterly and Annual Trend Reporting

We recommended that the Ministry of Education report trends in child care facilities' compliance with *The Child Care Regulations* to senior management quarterly and to the public annually. (2010 Report – Volume 1)

Status – We continue to make this recommendation.

In our 2010 audit, we found that the Ministry did not routinely provide written reports to senior management about facilities that were not complying with the Regulations. Regular written reports on non-compliance rates and causes, including trend information, would have helped senior management and the public monitor the level of risk to children and the effective use of public money.

The Ministry has established a system to track compliance. The Ministry uses the system to report to senior management. Quarterly reports include trend information about non-compliance with various sections of the Regulations.

The Ministry has not yet reported trends in child care facilities' compliance with the Regulations publicly. Management told us that it will do so in the 2012 Ministry of Education Annual Report.