

Chapter 21

Education—Putting into Operation the Education Sector-Wide Strategic Plan

1.0 MAIN POINTS

The Ministry of Education is responsible for providing leadership and direction to the Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 12 (PreK-12) education sector. This includes providing leadership and co-ordination for the preparation of goals, objectives, and educational planning for the present and future growth and development of the educational system.

By mid February 2017, the Ministry had implemented one of the two recommendations we made in our 2015 audit of its processes to put into operation the sector-wide strategic plan for the PreK-12 education sector, called the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP). The Ministry was actively assessing school division action plans. It had not yet determined how to communicate its assessment results to foster better alignment of school division action plans with ESSP outcomes.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes our follow-up of management's actions on two recommendations we made in our 2015 audit of the Ministry's processes to put into operation the ESSP. Our *2015 Report – Volume 1*, Chapter 9, concluded that the Ministry had effective processes except for the areas reflected in the two recommendations.

To conduct this review engagement, we followed the standards for assurance engagements published in the *CPA Canada Handbook – Assurance*. To evaluate the Ministry's progress towards meeting our recommendations, we used the relevant criteria from the original audit. The Ministry's management agreed with the criteria in the original audit.

We examined the Ministry's processes for reviewing school divisions' action plans supporting the ESSP. We also interviewed Ministry officials as necessary.

3.0 STATUS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

This section sets out each recommendation including the date on which the Standing Committee on Public Accounts agreed to the recommendation, the status of the recommendation at February 14, 2017, and the Ministry's actions up to that date. We found that the Ministry implemented one recommendation, and was in the process of implementing the remaining recommendation.



3.1 Deadline for Completion of Action Plans Established

We recommended that the Ministry of Education establish a deadline for completing action plans supporting achievement of the outcomes identified within the sector-wide strategic plan for the Pre-K through Grade 12 education sector. (2015 Report – Volume 1; Public Accounts Committee agreement January 13, 2016)

Status – Implemented

During 2016, the Ministry established an annual deadline of September 30 for receipt of school division action plans. The Ministry communicated the deadline to school divisions through the Provincial Leadership Team's (PLT)¹ calendar. The Ministry reminded PLT members of the deadline through emails and discussion at PLT meetings. For action plans not received by the deadline, we saw the Ministry followed up with school divisions on the status of their action plans.

3.2 Process to Review Action Plans Established but Not Complete

We recommended that the Ministry of Education, to co-ordinate plans across the sector, review school division action plans supporting achievement of the outcomes identified within the sector-wide strategic plan for the Pre-K through Grade 12 education sector. (2015 Report – Volume 1; Public Accounts Committee agreement January 13, 2016)

Status – Partially Implemented

At mid-February 2017, the Ministry had an established process to review school division action plans.

The Ministry developed criteria to assess alignment of the school division action plans with the outcomes identified in the ESSP. The Ministry was formally tracking the completion of its assessments and expected to complete its assessment of the school divisions' 2015-16 and 2016-17 action plans by June 2017.

While the Ministry reviewed only one-half of the six school division action plans we tested, it was in the process of reviewing the actions plans for all 28 school divisions. At mid February 2017, it had not yet determined how to communicate results of its assessment to school divisions in a way that would help them improve the alignment of their action plans with ESSP outcomes.

¹ In 2013, the Ministry of Education and school divisions formed the PLT to lead and co-ordinate the development and implementation of the ESSP. The PLT is made up of the Deputy Minister of Education, the Ministry's three Assistant Deputy Ministers, the Director of Education from each of the 28 school divisions, and representatives from the First Nations' school system. The PLT, along with other staff from the Ministry and school divisions, participated in the development of the ESSP.