

Nunavut lags in inspecting daycares and schools, audit finds ^[1]

Author: CBC News

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EXCERPTS:

Not enough is being done to ensure Nunavut's schools and daycares are safe, says the auditor general of Canada.

In an audit of the GN's responsibilities related to safety in childcare facilities and schools, it found the Government of Nunavut is not meeting its own guidelines when it comes to completing inspections.

The reports says the government is also lagging behind in ensuring problems found during inspections are fixed, and in conducting evacuation drills at the territory's schools.

"They are government's own rules and we're just auditing them against their rules," said Ronnie Campbell, assistant auditor general of Canada.

"They had determined that some inspections had to be done, fire inspections and other types of inspections, and we found that by and large, those things are not happening."

Nunavut has 52 childcare facilities, all of which are under the supervision of the Government of Nunavut.

The auditors found the Department of Education had conducted only 33 per cent of inspections for licensing childcare facilities within the required 12 month period.

The auditors also found the department was permitting childcare facilities to operate without a valid licence until an inspection could occur or a licence could be issued. The report states that 33 out of 35 facilities received these letters of permission at least once in the last two years.

The report also says less than 50 per cent of facilities met even basic inspection requirements. Forty per cent had not met the criminal record check requirement and 48 per cent had not met the requirement for every staff member to have a first aid certificate. Few follow ups were done to see if these requirements were met, but licences were still issued.

"Consequently, some childcare facilities do not meet the licensing requirements but are allowed to operate with known deficiencies that could put children at risk," the report says.

Since receiving the auditor general's findings earlier this summer, the Department of Education says it has stopped issuing the letters of permission that extended the length of time between daycare inspections.

"I can say now that no daycare is on a letter of permission and every daycare has been since inspected," said Kathy Ookpik, deputy minister of education. "We've made some significant changes in our approach to inspections of daycares."

Schools behind on fire drills

Auditors also found the Department of Education is not meeting its targets for school evacuation drills. Of the eight schools the auditors looked at, none had conducted the required number of drills per year.

The report also says the Department of Community and Government Services completed the required twice-a-year fire inspections in only five of the eight schools audited. Also, problems identified in fire inspections are not being fixed.

"Sixty per cent of the deficiencies noted in the fire inspections of schools within our sample had been previously raised in at least one other inspection," the report says. "In some cases, they were raised as many as nine times."

In the report, the GN says the Departments of Education and Community and Government Services are working on better communications and on identifying which department is responsible for following up on problems found in school fire inspections.

Region: Nunavut ^[2]

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/13/11/nunavut-lags-inspecting-daycares-and-schools-audit-finds> [2]
<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7862>