



News Release

For Immediate Release

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Some Licensed Child Care Operators Need More Stringent Oversight, Auditor General says

(TORONTO) The Ministry of Education needs to do much more to reduce the risk of children being injured or harmed while in the care of licensed child care operators, Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk says in her *2014 Annual Report*.

“The Ministry’s inspection processes and enforcement actions need to be improved to ensure that children are safe,” Lysyk said today after the release of the Report.

“We are concerned that child care operators are not reporting all serious occurrences. We found that many of these incidents were not being reported to the Ministry within the required 24 hours,” Lysyk said.

Licensed child care operators reported more than 29,000 of what are called serious occurrences from January 1, 2009, to May 31, 2014. These include serious injury to a child, abuse of a child, a child gone missing, fire or other disaster, and physical or safety threats on the premises.

In the case of some licensed child care operators, the same concerns about child health, safety and well-being were noted in multiple inspections, but remedial enforcement follow-up action was taken in only 18 cases in the last five years.

Other significant findings included the following:

- Over the last five years, one-third of child care operators were not inspected before the expiry date on their licences, including a number of operators with provisional licences who were considered to be at high risk for safety concerns.
- Ontario does not require that operators and staff of licensed child care facilities obtain what are known as vulnerable sector checks, which are more thorough than criminal reference checks.
- The caseloads of ministry program advisers, whose duties include licensing and handling complaints and serious occurrences, have grown significantly. In addition to other duties, more than half of program advisers were responsible for the inspection and oversight of more than 100 child care centres, compared to an average caseload of 65 per adviser in 2005.
- Ministry policies and guidelines are vague or nonexistent in a number of areas, including the conduct and depth of inspections of operators.
- In our review of a sample of new operators, we found that there were criminal record checks on file for only 50% of them.

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