

## Chapter 1

# Department of Education and Early Childhood Development: Planning and Implementation of the Pre-Primary Program

### Overall Conclusions

- The audit found the initial implementation of the Pre-Primary Program was not adequately planned.
- We did note the time frame for planning was only five months.
- Program enhancements were evident during the province-wide rollout.
- Department focus is needed to ensure program effectiveness and that it benefits four-year-old Nova Scotians.

### Why We Did This Audit

- Access to high-quality early learning programs is important to Nova Scotians.
- The program is a significant investment.
- Proper planning is essential for a new program with significant social impacts and financial investments.

## Planning and Implementation of the Pre-Primary Program

- Government announced the program in April 2017 with the initial phase to be implemented in September 2017, leaving the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development with a short time frame to properly plan for an entirely new program.
- The Department did not analyze the full implementation costs of the program.
- The Department prepared a risk assessment, but there is no formal process to continuously monitor risks.
- Consultation with families and the childcare industry happened after the first year of implementation began.
- The Department has not established specific and measurable goals to evaluate the program's effectiveness.
- Regional Centres for Education do not ensure Pre-Primary staff have completed required background checks or provided proof of qualifications before working in the classroom.
- New Pre-Primary staff are not consistently provided orientation before working in the classroom.
- Pre-Primary staff in the Department and at the Regional Centres for Education feel roles and responsibilities are unclear.



## Recommendations at a Glance

### **Recommendation 1.1**

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development should have a process in place to monitor risks on an ongoing basis.

### **Recommendation 1.2**

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development should establish specific and measurable goals for the Pre-Primary Program and identify and collect the necessary data required to measure against them.

### **Recommendation 1.3**

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development should regularly evaluate the program to determine whether goals and objectives are being met.

### **Recommendation 1.4**

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development should ensure all background checks for Pre-Primary Program staff are completed as required by policy before staff begin working in the classroom.

### **Recommendation 1.5**

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development should complete and implement their new provincial policy around background checks.

### **Recommendation 1.6**

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development should ensure Early Childhood Educator's education credentials are verified when they are hired.

### **Recommendation 1.7**

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development should develop a process to ensure all new Pre-Primary Program staff receive orientation prior to starting in the classroom.

### **Recommendation 1.8**

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development should clearly define and communicate roles and responsibilities related to the Pre-Primary Program for the Pre-Primary Consultant, Pre-Primary Managers, school principals, and Early Childhood Educators.

### **Recommendation 1.9**

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development should develop and implement a formal complaint process for the Pre-Primary Program that includes clearly defined and communicated roles and responsibilities.