

Father in Burnaby calls for rapid testing for child-care centres after toddler gets COVID-19 ^[1]

Andrew Longhurst's son Levi contracted COVID-19 from outbreak at SFU Childcare Society

Author:

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EXCERPTS

A father in Burnaby is calling for rapid COVID-19 testing to be deployed in child-care centres after his toddler was infected with the virus during an outbreak at his daycare.

Andrew Longhurst's 16-month-old son Levi tested positive for the coronavirus after the SFU Childcare Society notified parents of an exposure on Feb. 10.

"He had very mild symptoms of acute illness," said Longhurst. "But it's the last news that you want for your child."

Longhurst's wife, Levi's mother, tested positive five days later.

"It's no surprise to me that she contracted COVID," said Longhurst, even though they've "been obsessive about cleaning surfaces and we've opened all our windows and ventilated our 500-square-foot apartment."

The outbreak at SFU Childcare Society was declared by Fraser Health this week and is linked to at least 26 positive cases.

Earlier this week Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry said an unsanctioned pub trivia event held in the Fraser Health region had resulted in 15 people becoming infected with COVID-19 and spread to several workplaces, schools and a child-care centre.

Events such as trivia games nights at pubs are currently banned under provincial health rules.

The Fraser Health Authority has now linked the event to 25 primary cases of COVID-19 and other secondary cases. It has not confirmed the link between the pub and the daycare outbreak, but the outbreak at the SFU Childcare Society is the first in a daycare in the health authority during the pandemic.

Longhurst said that rapid testing could have helped prevent transmission at the daycare.

"When there was indication of one positive case in the child-care centre community, that's an opportunity to rapidly deploy rapid testing to the whole child-care community," he said.

The tests are able to determine a COVID-19 infection in a fraction of the time as lab-based tests, but are not as accurate.

B.C. has received more than 1.3 million rapid test kits from Ottawa, but has only deployed them at a few sites across the province. Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry has said the tests are not a solution because they take extra staff to administer.

Other sectors across B.C., such as long-term care homes for the elderly, have asked that rapid tests be used as a tool to control outbreaks and screen workers.

Two cohorts at the SFU Childcare Society have now been told to self-isolate and parents like Longhurst are scrambling to find alternative care.

"Thankfully, we have wonderful friends and family to call on. But I don't know how people without paid sick leave and ... who generally don't have a strong social network, I don't know what they would do in this situation," he said.

Longhurst says he and his family will have to isolate until March 7.

Region: British Columbia ^[3]

Tags: COVID-19 ^[4]

transmission ^[5]

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