

Troubled daycares close in Toronto's west end [CA-ON]^[1]

Author: Monsebraaten, Laurie

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EXCERPTS

Two troubled child-care centres in Toronto's west end have gone out of business, leaving some 65 families scrambling for daycare on the eve of the new school year.

Bobby Bhar, whose family has run Children's Corner Day Nursery centres on Jane St. and Royal York Rd. for the past 38 years, notified the city on Wednesday that the centres would be closing today. But provincial officials closed the Royal York Rd. centre yesterday due to a lack of food for the children at that location, city officials said.

The two centres and a third one on Kipling Ave., which closed last summer, were featured in a Star investigation of substandard daycares last summer. The Kipling and Royal York locations had been cited for various health and safety problems by both provincial and municipal inspectors for several years.

Bhar didn't return calls, but a spokesperson for the family defended the operator.

"The vast majority of the problems on file with the ministry had to do with the landlords not keeping up with the leasehold improvements required of them," said John Verdon, a family friend.

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At the Royal York centre last night, staff and parents were in shock.

"This centre has been part of my child's life since she was 18 months old," said a tearful Veronica Grant-Young as she picked up her 5-year-old daughter, Chanel.

"The teachers, the cook, they are like family to us. They really care about the children," she said as she hugged the staff farewell. "It's very emotional. It's very sad."

The city has offered all 42 subsidized children in the two centres spots in other daycares or with licensed home child-care providers. But for parents like Grant-Young, who doesn't drive, the sites aren't easily accessible by public transit.

Grant-Young will take today off work to arrange informal care and transportation to kindergarten for Chanel while she waits for a subsidized space closer to home.

"It's been very, very inconvenient," she said.

- reprinted from the Toronto Star

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