

More than 4 years later, province delivers on half of daycare promise ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

The Ontario government has delivered on half of a promise made four years ago to publish inspection reports for daycares online, but continues to drag its heels on a vow to publish reports of "serious" incidents.

The province has set no deadline for posting reports on incidents like abuse, mistreatment and serious injury or deaths, continuing to blame legal and privacy implications.

Last month, Education Minister Leona Dombrowsky said her ministry had been working with Ontario's privacy commissioner on how the information can be released. On Sunday, ministry spokesman Mike Feenstra said the discussion is ongoing.

NDP Leader Andrea Horwath called the failure to release the incident reports "absolutely shameful."

"What parents really want to know is that when they drop off their children at a child care centre that those children are going to safe and well looked after. And serious incident reports are something that help parents make that vital decision."

There were 5,510 serious incidents reported at child care centres last year. Incidents that daycares are required to report include missing children, outbreaks of infectious disease and any disaster on the premises, like floods and infestations. None of these has been made available to the public.

After a 2007 Star investigation exposed abuses and unsafe conditions in several daycares, the province vowed more transparency by posting detailed information on a public website, which would include annual inspection reports and serious incidents.

On April 18 - four years after that promise - the Star ran a front-page story asking why these reports were still not available online.

The province announced Sunday that it has made available up to three years of inspection reports for licensed child care centres. Until now, parents could only find out online whether a daycare is licensed and if there were any conditions.

Daycares are already required to post these inspection summaries in their centre and provide a hard copy of the report upon request.

Many child care advocates and government critics have blasted the province for taking four years to do this.

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"We are the first government to commit to provide this level of information for parents," said Dombrowsky in an email Sunday. "I am confident that the updates to the website will provide parents with very comprehensive information to assist them in making this important decision."

Child care advocate Martha Friendly said that releasing at least some information online is a good thing, but made clear that there are deeper problems with child care in Ontario.

"From my point of view I think that putting the details on a website for parents to monitor is only dealing with it as a tiny tip of an iceberg," she said, adding that there has to be better regulation as opposed to putting parents in a position where they have to be both consumer and watchdog.

"We need an early child care system where the parents can be assured that the equipment and furnishings are in good condition ... to me these things should be givens."

-reprinted from the Toronto Star

Region: Ontario ^[2]

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Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/11/05/more-4-years-later-province-delivers-half-daycare-promise> [2]

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