

Childcare advocates speak out after daycare operator jailed ^[1]

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EXCERPTS:

Advocates for affordable childcare are speaking out after a Coquitlam daycare operator was sentenced in the death of a young boy.

On Monday, Maria McFerran was sentenced to 18 months in jail in connection with the death of 11-month-old Arto Howley. He died after being left alone strapped into a car seat.

McFerran was only supposed to have two children at her unlicensed Coquitlam daycare, but had six kids in her care at the time of Arto's death.

Sharon Gregson with the Coalition of Child Care Advocates for B.C. says the lack of affordable daycare means parents are taking risks.

"It's quite understandable that a whole underground, illegal system of daycare has developed in the absence of a provincial childcare system."

She says in Vancouver, fulltime childcare fees range from \$1,200 to \$1,900 a month.

"It's a system that's wholly dependent on massive parent fees to stay alive."

Gregson says the province needs to step in to create a public daycare system.

"Of course parents want the best for their children and parents, on a day-to-day basis, are doing the very best they can to find quality childcare they can afford so they can go to work and support their family," Gregson said.

"Really the emphasis in this tragedy comes down on our new provincial government."

A number of past infractions which were investigated by the Fraser Health Authority had been filed against McFerran, including denying entry to inspectors and taking on too many children.

Fraser Health says it only inspects unlicensed facilities if there is a complaint. It doesn't post those inspections online, but says parents can call to find out a daycare's record.

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Region: British Columbia ^[2]

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