

# Ombudsman launches preliminary investigation into unlicensed home daycares <sup>[1]</sup>

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## EXCERPTS:

Ontario's ombudsman has launched a preliminary investigation into the provincial government's handling of complaints lodged against the home-based child-care centre near Toronto where a toddler died earlier this week.

André Marin said Friday that he was directing staff to conduct a case assessment to determine whether or not an investigation is warranted in relation to the July 9 death of a two-year-old in Vaughan.

In a statement, Marin said investigators from his office will consider factors such as the ministry's monitoring and enforcement relating to unlicensed child-care settings.

Such an assessment is the first step in any ombudsman investigation.

It comes in response to a complaint filed Thursday by the New Democrats, who accuse the Liberal government of inadequately protecting children in unlicensed care settings.

The Vaughan centre was in violation of the Day Nurseries Act. It had at least one other violation in the past year and was also the subject of at least two complaints that Education Minister Liz Sandals says her ministry failed to investigate.

"The Minister's admission of her government's negligence in following up on these complaints is appalling," wrote Monique Taylor, the NDP's critic for children and youth.

"Oversight of the well-being of children in Ontario is paramount. A child's daycare must not be a dangerous place."

Yet several cases in recent years suggest unlicensed child-care centres in private homes can be just that.

Two-year-old Jérémie Audette died in 2010 after being found at the bottom of a swimming pool at an unlicensed child-care provider in Orléans.

A coroner's inquest last year issued a number of recommendations, including the creation of a provincewide registry for unlicensed childcare providers that would help gather data, distribute information and allow for unscheduled safety inspections.

The inquest's jury also suggested the province explore ways to increase the number of licensed caregivers.

Several months later, the City of Ottawa introduced new rules for backyard pools requiring that doors or gates leading to them be locked unless they're actively in use. Gates leading to public areas also have to be locked unless someone is walking through them.

Requiring all home-based child-care providers to affiliate with a licensed agency would go a long way to preventing tragedies, said child-care advocate Kim Hiscott.

The executive director of Andrew Fleck Child Care Services said her organization is licensed to provide home-based child care through its 140 affiliated caregivers, who are monitored on a regular basis.

But Hiscott estimates that some 40 per cent of children in Ontario are cared for in unregulated, unlicensed settings, in part due to lack of access to spaces in licensed settings.

Were it required by law to be affiliated with a licensed agency, Hiscott said the home-based daycare in Vaughan wouldn't have passed its first review and been forced to shut down immediately.

While she understands many parents turn to unlicensed providers out of necessity, Hiscott said encouraging more caregivers to affiliate with licensed providers would increase access to facilities that are regularly reviewed to ensure compliance with the law.

-reprinted from the Ottawa Citizen

**Region:** Ontario <sup>[2]</sup>

**Tags:** unregulated <sup>[3]</sup>

unlicensed-home

#### Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/13/07/ombudsman-launches-preliminary-investigation-unlicensed-home> [2]  
<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7856> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/unregulated>