

# Listeria found at Vaughan daycare where tot died <sup>[1]</sup>

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## EXCERPTS:

Public health inspectors found listeria, potentially deadly bacteria, in a chicken stew, cooked grains and deli meats at an illegal Vaughan home daycare where a toddler died in July.

Inspectors also found garbage with dirty diapers in the kitchen; expired or rotting food in the fridge and freezer; unsanitized toys; evidence of inadequate hand washing or dishwashing capacity, and other sanitation concerns in the home at 343 Yellowwood Circle, according to the inspection report obtained under a Freedom of Information request.

Police noted that 14 dogs and nine children were found in a house next door to the unregulated home daycare where 2-year-old Eva Ravikovich died July 8, according to notes by York Region Public Health inspector Cameron Weighill.

Meanwhile, one family is alleging their 3 1/2-year-old daughter, who was toilet-trained, was made to wear diapers and belted into a car seat while watching TV unsupervised in the basement of the daycare. The family said their child often smelled like a dog when she came home.

At least 35 children were registered at the daycare by the operator, who appeared to be caring for them in the two homes, York public health officials have said.

The coroner has not yet determined a cause of death in the troubling case.

But Dr. David Evans, regional coroner for Brampton and Vaughan, told the Star on Thursday that "The findings have not indicated a food problem (and) have not indicated an infectious problem."

Olena Panfilova, who operated the illegal child care business with her daughter, Karina Rabadanova, did not respond Thursday to phone calls, voice messages or hand-delivered letters requesting comment on the public health findings or the family's allegations.

Public health officials on July 8 and 9 also found a "garlic-tomato mixture that appeared to be fermenting in the fridge . . . dried oatmeal stored under the sink with cleaners and garbage," cheese in the freezer with a best-before date of September 2012, and deli meat in the fridge that expired on June 19.

"From the diapers in the kitchen, to the fermenting food in the fridge, it's really quite something," said Andrea Calver of the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, which made the freedom of information request for the public health report in July.

The coalition is calling on the government to license all people who provide child care in their homes.

A spokesperson for York public health said she was unable to comment on the inspector's findings due to the ongoing investigation and litigation around the death.

The toddler's parents, Ekaterina Evtropova and Vycheslav Ravikovich launched a \$3.5 million lawsuit in August against the daycare owners and operators, as well as the education ministry. They allege that neglect and a failure to follow up on complaints about the number of kids at the daycare led to Eva's death.

The ministry has admitted there were five complaints lodged against the operation, but just one was ever investigated. Seven children were found in the unlicensed home when the ministry investigated in November 2012. The operators were cautioned and there was no follow-up.

Under the provincial Day Nurseries Act, unlicensed home daycare operators are allowed to care for no more than five unrelated children younger than age 10.

York Public Health closed 343 Yellowwood Circle on July 9 for infractions under the Health Protection and Promotion Act.

Patrick Brown, the lawyer for Eva's parents, hadn't heard about the presence of dogs in the house, or the listeria. He said he and the family are frustrated that investigations by the police, coroner and education ministry are taking so long.

"It would be nice if things moved a lot quicker," he said.

Brown said he has yet to receive a response to the family's lawsuit from either the government or the daycare operators.

Parent Oksana Dulin, whose 3-year-old attended the home daycare last year, said she pulled her daughter out after she came home

talking about wearing diapers in a seatbelt while watching cartoons.

When asked about the presence of dogs at the home, Dulin said she wasn't surprised.

"Most of the times when she'd come back, she would smell like a dog," Dulin said.

In addition to recording a long list of food-related health hazards, food-handling and sanitation infractions the evening of the toddler's death, inspectors returned on several other occasions.

Weighill's hand-written notes from July 19 indicate a concern that that the operator and her daughter would reopen the daycare at the house next door.

"Karina indicated that they would not be reopening at 343, but may open at 345," he wrote.

"Told Karina if they plan to open any type of daycare again that it is important they know food and safety and IPAC (infection, prevention and control) policies . . . Child and Family Services will likely want you to demonstrate knowledge of this information."

Calver, at the child-care coalition, was floored by the revelation.

"On July 19 - 10 days after a child dies in their care - they think they are going to reopen next door? The place with the 14 dogs? It's unbelievable to me," she said.

The Ministry of Education filed an injunction in August to prevent the operators from reopening a daycare in the province.

A spokesperson for Minister Liz Sandals acknowledged the ministry is not well equipped to handle "outliers."

"We recognize a court injunction is a cumbersome solution to something like this, which is, frankly, a no-brainer," said Lauren Ramey.

She said the government is reviewing the province's child-care legislation to "strengthen the safety and quality of child-care choices for families."

In early September, Panfilova put the house where Eva died up for sale, though no sign was in the front yard Thursday.

Panfilova and her husband are asking for \$528,000. They bought it just over three years ago for \$436,500, according to property records. Those same records show that the couple took out a \$402,278 mortgage when they bought the house and a second one for \$45,000 in August this year, six weeks after their daycare had been shut down.

On Thursday, the lawyer for Eva's parents was granted a court order preventing the sale for 90 days so he can investigate the home.

-reprinted from the Toronto Star

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

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

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