

'There was no room': Witness testifies at trial of family accused of running illegal daycare ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

More than two years after two-year-old Eva Ravikovich was found dead in a Vaughan daycare, the alleged daycare providers are on trial. Ruslan Panfilova, wife Olena Panfilova and daughter Karyna Rabadanova are on trial in provincial court on accusations that they were running an illegal, unlicensed daycare -- a charge under the Day Nurseries Act.

No charges have been laid in relation to Ravikovich's death, though it was her death that brought police to 343 Yellowwood Circle on July 8, 2013.

Testifying on the first day of the trial, York Regional Police Const. Peter Scalise said Friday that when he arrived at the home, paramedics were working on Ravikovich in the family room.

"My role was to look after the children within the home, which were all on the second floor in the home," Scalise testified. "I counted 18 children in three separate rooms."

Asked by Crown attorney Abel Fok why he counted the children, Scalise said, "I had a feeling that at one point that was going to be crucial just because of the amount of kids that were in the house. To mean it didn't seem right... I was overwhelmed. The difference of ages of the children in the small space upstairs was just overwhelming too me."

One room had the older children, no older than 10, Scalise said. A second room had younger children. It was "filled with toys, almost over-filled with toys, and kids in that room as well, there were too many kids in that room."

The third room was filled with playpens and crying babies, Scalise said.

"I remember the playpen room was very packed. There was no room inside because the playpens took up all the space," he said.

Referring to the playpen room, Const. Terry Woods testified, "I was told that was where the deceased child was found. There was no other children inside that playpen. There were a bunch of blankets inside."

Woods said the air was hot and the babies were crying.

"When I was upstairs, it was very, very hot. I was sweating profusely," he said. I recall sweating the entire time, being uncomfortable and hot. Children, specifically the younger children ... in the playpens were screaming and crying, very hot to touch. One child specifically was crying the entire time that I was there. I tried to hold the child for a period of time to try to just console the child."

Woods described an unusually high number of air fresheners in the home and, like Scalise, said there was no adult furniture or decor in the home.

"It was just a fully converted daycare. That was my idea of the house, that it was just specifically there as a daycare," Woods said.

The bathroom upstairs was so full of garbage and discarded toys that it was unusable as a bathroom, Woods said.

Const. Ivan Roach testified about going next door, to 345 Yellowwood Circle, where the officers believed the accused to live and where more children were found.

He said the garage was filled with garbage and cardboard boxes and there were more than a dozen dogs in the house.

"It was so disgusting, I would remember something like that," he said, referring to the smell.

"This particular incident sticks in my head. It kind of bothers me. It's one of the worst ones I've had to deal with, the unnecessary death of a child," Roach testified

Public Health inspector Cameron Weighill testified that in the house where Ravikovich was found, he saw a large garbage bag in the kitchen with dirty diapers. He said there was unsafe food handling conditions and ordered the daycare closed. It has never re-opened.

The trial continues Monday.

The cause of death for Ravikovich has never been released. The York Regional Police Homicide Squad took control of the investigation, though criminal charges have never been laid.

Asked for the status of the case Thursday, Const. Andy Pattenden said in an e-mail, "The investigation is ongoing."

-reprinted from CTV News

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