

Beaches-East York MPP Potts presents petition to ban non-refundable waiting list fees for daycare ^[1]

Author: Lavoie, Joanna

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EXCERPTS

Beaches-East York MPP Arthur Potts has presented a petition in the Legislature that calls for a ban on the practice of charging non-refundable waiting list fees to parents for daycare spaces in Ontario.

The Liberal MPP introduced the document in the House Monday, April 11.

"The whole idea of reading a petition is to get people thinking about it," said Potts, who is also in the process of preparing a private member's bill that calls for the addition of a new regulation to Ontario's Child Care Act on this issue. He said he hopes the private member's bill will be tabled by one of his fellow MPPs as he's already presented one.

Potts said he first heard about the problematic practice after constituent Nadine Blum, who lives near Danforth and Woodbine avenues, and her friend/colleague Kelly Doctor came in to discuss it with him.

During their conversation, Potts said he was "shocked" to learn Blum, who has a two-year-old son, was repeatedly asked to pay non-refundable fees of \$20 to \$150 to put her child's name on daycare wait lists in 2015.

"I recognized this was a real hardship that wasn't being looked after," he said earlier this week.

"So I worked with (Doctor and Blum) on a process that we could try to get this issue forward and we do seem to be doing fairly well."

Doctor, who lives in the city's west end, but is supporting Blum by helping her with the petition, said at least 200 people have signed it since it was launched just a few weeks ago.

"Until we see a change in the law, it won't change the practice," she said Tuesday afternoon.

"It's about raising awareness, getting the conversation about daycare accessibility started."

Doctor went on to say that this issue is a "symptom of a bigger problem" where daycare providers are making parents compete for spaces instead of being a public good.

Both women, who are also lawyers at Goldblatt Partners LLP, also want policies put in place across Ontario to ensure families waiting for a daycare space for their child are being treated fairly.

"That's the second part of our petition," Doctor said.

"People are skipping the queue. It's not a first-come, first-serve system."

On April 1, Ontario Minister of Education Liz Sandals said she'd look into regulating or even prohibiting the practice after Blum's non-refundable daycare wait list payments came to light.

Potts vowed he'd hold Sandals to task.

"In the meantime, I'm working with the minister of education, who has carriage of this issue, to see what else we could do so we can move this along faster. And I appreciate that (the ministry of education) has expressed an interest in looking at this and, I take them seriously at their word," he said.

"We'll find a way to do this in a respectful manner."

Visit <http://goldblattpartners.com/wp-content/uploads/Petition20to20Ban20Dayca...> ^[3] to download a copy of Blum and Doctor's petition.

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