

Giving our kids a safe place to play; [Final Edition]

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A Calgary mother is lobbying for safer playground equipment after her son fell through the platform of his plastic slide and ended up in a hospital emergency room.

Pauline Hampson says her 9-year-old son Tim tore his back and abdomen and is now facing minor surgery as a result of a fall through the slide at their home last April.

"I am furious," says Hampson who paid about \$170 for the slide two years ago. "To me, that's like having a loaded weapon in the backyard.

"Three inches further, and it would have cut his throat. My question is why should this thing be a killer? I think there should be standards for this type of equipment."

The mother of five says she was outside watching Tim - who has Down syndrome - play when he fell through the platform as he lowered himself to the slide. He was cut by the plastic.

"When I pulled him out from under the slide, he was covered in blood," Hampson says.

Tim was treated for the wounds and complications resulted.

There are safety guidelines but no legislated standards for playground equipment, says Rosemary MacVicar-Elliot of the Canadian Standards Association.

The Toronto-based association is a non-profit group that helps form guidelines on products such as cycling and hockey helmets.

Tragic playground deaths in recent years prompted the Alberta Medical Association and Alberta SAFE KIDS to publish a manual for parents.

In 1992, an Edmonton toddler choked to death on a day-care slide when her drawstring snagged on the top of the slide. At least three other Canadian children died of strangulation when parts of their clothing got caught on playground equipment that year. In Metro this year, John McLeod, 4, died of asphyxiation on March 14 at a City of York playground. He had been caught around the neck by a skipping rope tied to the top of a slide.