

Hello,

My son was a consumer of many of the RCFs in the city over the past 12 years. This was due to an unstable mental health condition that required hospitalization and subsequent placement in several of the lodging homes in the city. Thankfully, my son is now mentally well on different and correct medications that has allowed for his independence. He now lives on his own and with help can make his own decisions and is responsible for the cooking and cleaning of his apartment for which he is quite responsible.

There was an article in the Spectator on Thursday Dec. 5 2019 which highlighted many of the issues that my son was dealing with in these places. The article talks about "the economics of caring". What I feel is the central issue in these subsidized "for profit" homes is that the landlords or owners of these homes are trying to make a living but also as Mr. Cain states in the article: "If you are looking to make a quick buck and get rich in this business, it is not going to happen."

Should we allow these "for profit homes" to continue or should we look to change the landscape for these vulnerable residents and have non-profit organizations funded by the province and city and federally, if possible to make these homes run properly for the good of the residents. These people deserve this. If you look at the state of Long Term Care homes for Seniors, there are very strict systems in place where the facility is held accountable for caring properly for these people. Why not care for our vulnerable population of residents who need beds and care in the current RCFs in the same way. What about allowing some fostering of independence for these people at the same time? Why does the owner of the RCF take all of the ODSP cheque and the resident are left with a small allowance? Is that right?

In my experience I witnessed freezing cold facilities with no sheets on the bed and linen was not changed so there was an explosion of bedbugs that could not be eradicated. Meals were served 3 times a day with a small snack at night if the resident was lucky. The meals were very bland and did not always have a lot of protein so potatoes and rice were always served and watered down soup. I saw a resident who I recognized on the street begging one day. I asked if he was OK. He said he was starving and wanted to buy a pizza. Of course you could say that he may have been using the money for something else. I believed him because I saw what was being served and most importantly, my son told me. I made a complaint to the City of Hamilton Public Health Nurse and she was able to respond by monitoring the calories of the food that was being served and the meals were slightly improved as a result.

In the summer, in one of the homes, my son was on the top floor. He said he could hardly sleep because it was like a furnace. I made a complaint to the City's Public Health Department and portable air conditioners were installed. It is life threatening for some of these vulnerable people not to have access to cooling especially due to the medications that they are prescribed.

Regarding medications, some of the drug cupboards were not locked and the medications could be freely taken by the wrong person. The medications were handed out to residents by non-registered staff.

I could say more about what I have witnessed in Residential Care Facilities that my son lived in, but I will hopefully have the opportunity to do so at a future time.

One last thought. My son was one of the lucky ones. He had family who loved him and he through himself and his Doctor was able to become well and move successfully into his new life that he is so happy and thankful for. Those people who need to live in RCFs are vulnerable. Some are frail, elderly, or have mental health issues or developmental and addiction issues. These are the forgotten ones to their families and friends for the most part. They have also been the forgotten ones in our city. Please consider making a change in their futures and change the model of care for these people. I would be happy to lend my support in helping in any way to help make this happen.

Sincerely,

Margaret Gauthier RN BScN
(Mother and concerned citizen)