

Bates, Tamara

Subject: FW: Concern regarding RCFs

From: James Curtis-Welsh < >

Sent: November 25, 2020 2:27 PM

To: Nann, Nrinder <Nrinder.Nann@hamilton.ca>

Cc: clerk@hamilton.ca

Subject: Concern regarding RCFs

Good Afternoon Councillor Nann,

As per your request see below an official statement regarding Residential Care Facilities:

I am a community mental health social worker in the City of Hamilton. Service providers have known about the condition of Emerald Lodge for years. The article in today's edition of the Hamilton Spectator is a horrifying account of the final days of this facility's operations. While I am relieved that this facility was evacuated, I am deeply concerned about the RCF system as a whole.

RCFs often "cherry pick" their residents and service users deemed "hard to house" often wind up at places like Emerald Lodge because no other facility will take them in. We try to complain to the city, but it is difficult to see follow-through because resources are so scant.

Furthermore, residents are often afraid to file a complaint due to possible retaliation by an operator. It is absolutely infuriating that it took such a crisis for the loopholes in the RCF system to be exposed. I believe as a foundation this is what needs to be done:

1. Reduce the role of for-profit operators, all but two facilities in Hamilton are for-profit. We have seen that for-profit operators put profits over people, and this is never acceptable.
2. Increase monitoring from Public Health to ensure basic needs are being met. I believe it should be on the same, if not increased level of scrutiny that dining establishments have.
3. Hire a systems navigator specifically to provide support for RCF residents, ensuring they are connected with proper resources and to act as an advocate. Registered Social Workers and Registered Social Service Workers are highly qualified professionals for this role.
4. Open government, we should be able to easily access inspection reports, statuses of licenses, etc. This would make placements easier for service providers, families and service users themselves.
5. At a provincial level, the personal needs allowance for individuals in domiciliary hostels (provincial term for RCFs) needs to be increased. Residents typically receive approximately \$140 a month for expenses not related to food or housing, this is unacceptable for someone to survive on.

It is clear that the system has failed and we need to make sure another Emerald Lodge never happens again.

Sincerely,

James Curtis-Welsh MSW, RSW