



April 19, 2021

Minister Christine Elliott
Minister of Health
Email: christine.elliott@ontario.ca

Minister Michael Tibollo
Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Email: michael.tibollo@ontario.ca

Minister Todd Smith
Minister of Children, Community and Social Services
Email: MinisterMCCSS@ontario.ca

Dear Ministers Elliott, Tibollo and Smith,

I'm writing to express my concern about the decision to eliminate on-site mental health services at Syl Apps Youth Centre (SAYC) for seriously ill young people in the youth justice system. Closing this Centre has the potential to create crisis admissions to hospital and increase pressures on acute health services.

In the context of understanding that #MentalHealthIsHealth, I believe that this service should fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Health. This would enable an integrated approach to a complex patient population. International evidence indicates that up to 90% of youth in the youth justice system will have a mental disorder, and 25% will have acute and complex mental illness requiring specialized treatment. These young people deserve timely access to effective care.

If SAYC is closed, justice involved youth with complex mental illness will no longer have access to treatment that is matched to their level of need. It is inevitable that they be in crisis when they finally to get care. Over the long term, untreated or under-treated mental disorders – including addictions – will create a lifelong impact on health outcomes and accrue enormous costs to society for social, justice and health care services.

I urge you to immediately transfer this specialized mental health program to the Ministry of Health. CAMH and our Community partners would be pleased to support the transfer.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Catherine".

Dr. Catherine Zahn
President and CEO