

From: Clinton, Jean <clintonj@mcmaster.ca>

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To: todd.smith@ontario.ca <todd.smith@ontario.ca>, Janet.Menard@ontario.ca <Janet.Menard@ontario.ca>, Christine.elliott@ontario.ca <Christine.elliott@ontario.ca>, James.Wallace@ontario.ca <James.Wallace@ontario.ca>

Cc: Vijay.Chauhan@ontario.ca <Vijay.Chauhan@ontario.ca>, h.watt@ontario.ca <h.watt@ontario.ca>, helen.angus@ontario.ca <helen.angus@ontario.ca>, Simona Johnston <simona.j.work@gmail.com>, Clinton, Jean <clintonj@mcmaster.ca>

Subject: Syl Apps MH bed closure

Dear Ministers Smith and Elliot and respected staff,

I am reaching out to you today to request that you seriously reconsider the decision to close essential beds for our most at risk and traumatized youth, unfortunately caught up in the Youth Justice system.

I am a child psychiatrist and have been involved with many youth and agencies for over 30 years. I was actively involved in supporting the relook at solitary confinement for youth and have done much education with the youth justice system on brain development and mental health.

I can say without doubt that the young people in the care of Syl Apps have EXTRA ordinary needs that our mental health system just cannot handle. This is not from a lack of willingness but rather because the requisite level of skill, the context and the milieu that affords success is only available in a specialized centre such as Syl Apps. In addition the traumatic, racialized anti-racist, anti-indigenous, and oppressive life experiences of these youth really require a deeply practised, educated and empathic team and milieu support.

They cannot be successfully transferred and hope to have their mental health needs met in a business as usual, or even augmented application kind of way. To think they might be is simply wrong. They have more complex medical needs with an average of 4 different diagnosis and complex medication utilization. They are already feeling that they have done something wrong by being moved and I understand some have been hospitalized with suicidal ideation. We can not do more harm to these already vulnerable youth. Our first maxim in Health is first do no harm.

We would never in other system say, we don't have the right specialized surgeon for you, but this Dr who cares but is not trained to meet your needs will do.

These are our MOST traumatised youth.

Please reconsider.

I would like to request a meeting to discuss this further as I truly think if the correct picture was understood this decision would be reconsidered.

Yours sincerely,

Jean Clinton
9053175868